9. KURMA PURANA

Introduction

(The samudra manthana story is given in great detail in the Ramayana and the Mahabharataa. As for Lakshmi, some of the Puranas state that she was born as the daughter of Khyati and the sage Bhrigu. She was then married to Vishnu. But the demons defeated the gods and Indra. The sage Durvasa therefore cursed Lakshmi that she would have to live in the ocean. And when the ocean was churned, Lakshmi emerged yet again.)

Indra, the other gods, and the sages were charmed at Lakshmi's beauty when she appeared. "Who is this wonderful goddess?" they asked Vishnu.

"This is Lakshmi," replied Vishnu. "She is also known as Shakti. It is with her help that I delude the universe and its inhabitants with my illusions (maya). It is Lakshmi who gives me all my powers, although she is no different from me in essence."

Vishnu then proceeded to tell the gods and the sages the story of Indradyumna.

Indradyumna

Many years ago, there was a king named Indradyumna. He ruled the world well and, when he died, was reborn as a brahmana, (The brahmanas constitute the first of the four classes, their primary duties are to study the Vedas and perform sacrifices.)

As a brahmana, Indradyumna observed religious rites and meditated. He also stared to pray to the goddess Lakshmi. When Lakshmi appeared, Indradyumna begged of her, "Please tell me about yourself. Please give me insight into what constitutes true knowledge."

"Even the gods and the sages are unable to comprehend my true nature," replied Lakshmi. "I an Vishnu's illusions and there is no difference between him and me. As for knowledge, it is beyond my powers to grant you that. You will have to pray to the great Vishnu himself."

Having said this, Lakshmi disappeared, and Indradyumna started to pray to Vishnu. Several years passed, but Indradyumna continued to meditate. Linally, Vishnu appeared and instructed Indradyumna on the path to true knowledge.

"What did you tell Indradyumna?" asked the gods and the sages. "What was this wonderful knowledge?"

"I will repeat it for your benefit," replied Vishnu.

Since Vishnu repeated his teachings while in the form of a turtle of Kurma, these sacred words are known as the Kurma Purana. There are many subjects that Vishnu's instructions covered, but let us first start with the concept of varna ashrama dharma, Dharma means righteousness and these precepts lay down the fundamental principles of righteous conduct. This is typified in the system of four vamas (classes) and four ashramas (stages of life).

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VarnAshrama Dharma

Vishnu said that before creation began, there was only water in the universe and Vishnu slept on these waters. When it was time for creation

to begin, Brahma emerged from Vishnu's body. And Shiva emerged from Vishnu's anger. Lakshmi too was created from Vishnu's body and took her place by Vishnu's side.

Brahma told Vishnu, "Please use this goddess to delude the beings whom I will create. Tell her to sow the seeds of illusions in their minds. Please tell her to make the righteous prosper."

Vishnu complied. He requested Lakshmi, "Please delude and destroy gods, demons and humans who are about to be created. But please leave the righteous alone and make them prosper. I will tell you how to know the righteous. They are those that follow the precepts of varna ashrama dharma."

The brahmanas constitute the first of the four classes. Brahma created nine sons from his mental powers. Their names were Marichi, Bhrigu, Angira, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu, Daksha, Atri and Vashishtha. These sons became sages and they were the first brahmanas. They were created from Brahma's mouth. There are six types of action that are recommended for brahmanas. These are yajana (performing sacrifices), yajana (acting as priests at sacrifices), dana (donation of alms), pratigraha (receiving gifts), adhyapana (teaching and adhyayana (studying). A brahmana who performs these tasks well, attains the wonderful place known as prajapatya. (This would seem to be synonymous with Brahma's residence of Brahmaloka).

The kshatriyas constitute the second of the four classes. They were created from Brahma's arms. The duties of kshatriyas include dana (donation of alms), adhyayana (studying) and performing yajnas (sacrifices). But their primary duties are to take up arms and fight. It is their job to punish the evil and protect the good. A kshatriya who performs these tasks well, attains Indra's residence of Indraloka.

The vaishyas constitute the third of the four classes. They were created from Brahma's thighs. Like the kshatriyas, the vaishyas can also donate alms, study and perform sacrifices. But their primary duty is agriculture, (In many other Puranas, trade and animal husbandry are mentioned in addition to agriculture). A vaishya who performs these tasks well, gets to live with Vayu, the god of the wind.

The shudras constitute the last of the four classes. They were created from Brahma's feet. Their primary duty is to serve the other three classes. In addition, a shudra can adopt artisanship as an occupation, A shudra who performs these tasks well, will live with the gandharvas (singers of heaven).

Generally speaking, all four classes have to observe the religion that is prescribed in the vedas. There are various other shastras (religious texts) that circulate on earth. But many of them are against the Vedas. The religion that is prescribed in such anti-Vedic texts must not be followed. Only sinners follow such religions, and they are doomed to eternal damnation.

There are four ashramas (stages of life). The first one is brahmacharya (celibate studenthood). The primary duties of a person who is in this stage of life are studying the Vedas and serving one's guru (teacher) well. He has to live on alms that are obtained through begging. When this

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stage of life if over, there are two options that are available to the individual. In rare instances, he may desire to devote the rest of his life to studying and meditation. Such a person is known as naishthika. More commonly, individuals wish to step into the next stage of life. An

individual who does so is known as an upakurvana.

The second stage of life is Grihastha (householder stage). A householder's primary duties are serving guests, performing sacrifices, donating alms, worshipping the gods and keeping the sacred fire burning in the house at all times. In cases where the householder is absent from the house, these functions are to be performed by his wife or sons, or even by his priest, a householder must not also forget to study a little bit of the Vedas every day. The householder stage is superior to the other three stages of life. The reason is that the alms provided by a householder are the means of sustenance for individuals who are in the other three stages of life. A householder may be one of two types. He may be a sadhaka, in which case his chief obsession is that of satisfying his friends and relatives. Alternatively, there may be a householder who is udasina. This means that he is not really interested in his wife, his sons or in the acquisition of material wealth. His chief obsession is that of being freed from the bonds of the world.

The third stage of life is vanaprastha (forest dwelling stage). Such a person retires to the forest and lives on fruits and roots. He studies the Vedas, performs tapasya (meditation) and observes religious rites, but one should never embark on a forest-dwelling stage unless one's mind is ready for it. This also means that one must have had sons. Without sons to carry on the line, it is not recommended that a householder venture out on the forest-dwelling stage. There are two types of forest-dwellers. The first type consists of individuals who primarily devote themselves to worshipping the gods and performing religious ceremonies. Such an individual is known as a tapasya, because he does do some tapasya. But there are individuals who devote themselves entirely to meditation. Such a person is known as a sannyasika, since there is very little of difference between him and a sannyasi (hermit).

The fourth and final stage of life is sannyasa (hermithood). Such individuals spend all their time in meditating. They beg food for a living. It is not proper to become a hermit unless one's mind has achieved detachment from the world. There are two types of hermits. The first type consists of those who are trying to realise the true nature of the atman (human soul). Such a person treats all other individuals as he would treat himself and is known as a yogi. But there are also hermits who go through

intense meditation so as to attain the supreme wisdom. Such a person is known as a paramaeshthika.

There are various other traits that are demanded by the righteous way of life. One must forgive and display pity. One must not be jealous and must be ready to sacrifice one's own selfish interests. One must be truthful, practice non-violence and leam to control the senses. One must also visit tirthas (places of pilgrimage). It is also important to realise that one does not perform actions for the sake of the fruits of the actions. The fruits of all actions vest with the Brahman (the divine essence). In fact, it is a gross misconception to think that the specific action is being performed by an individual. All actions are performed by the Brahman, the ordinary human being is merely an instrument. As long as this realisation is missing, an individual is ignorant and is doomed to the shackles of worldly bonds.

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Creation

Vishnu next narrated to the gods and the sages the history of creation.

In the beginning, the Brahman was everywhere. The Brahman had no form, but nor was it without form. It had no beginning and no end. It had no traits, but nor was it without traits. The Brahman is impossible to describe, sense or see.

Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva are derived from the Brahman, Brahma performs the function of a creator, Vishnu that of a preserver and Shiva that of destroyer.

When it was time for creation to begin, the Brahman created water throughout the universe. Before that, there was nothing. In the water, there appeared a golden (hiranya) egg (anda). The egg grew in size and Brahma, the creator, appeared inside the egg. Everything that there is in the universe was already there, in in embryonic form, inside the egg. There were gods, the demons humans, the sun, the moon, the stars, the planets and the wind. The word garbha means womb and since Brahma originated from inside a golden (hiranya) egg, he is known as Hiranyagarbha. Brahma was the first being to be created. He had four faces. He had no birth (janana) in the real sense of the term. He is therefore also referred to as Aja (without birth). It is also true that he created (bhuva) himself (svayam). It is because of this that Brahma is known as Svayambhu. Brahma was to be the lord (pati) of all the subjects who were going to be bom (praja). Thus, Brahma acquired the name of Prajapati.

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A Digression on Time

The smallest unit of time is a nimesha. Fifteen nimeshas make one kashtha, thirty kashthas are one kala and thirty kalas constitute one

muhurta. There are thirty muhurtas in a span of day and night (ahoratra). Thirty such ahoratras make up a month. There are two pakshas (fortnight) in every month. Six months constitute an ayana and two ayanas a year. There are thus twelve months in every year. The names of the two ayanas are uttarayana and Dakshainayana. While humans pass through uttarayana, the gods pass through only one day. Similarly, when humans pass through Dakshainayana, the gods pass through merely one night. One year for humans is equivalent to a time span of one day and one night for the gods.

Twelve thousand years of the gods make up one mahayuga. This is subdivided into four yugas (eras). The names of these eras are Satya Yuga or Krita Yuga, Treta Yuga, Dvapara Yuga and Kali Yuga. Satya Yuga has four thousand years, Treta Yuga three thousand, Dvapara Yuga two thousand and Kali Yuga one thousand. This adds up to ten thousand years. But there are also periods that join two yugas: (sandhyamsha). Satya Yuga has a sandhyamsha of four hundred years, Treta Yuga of three hundred, Dvapara Yuga of two hundred and Kali Yuga of one hundred, There will therefore be seven hundred additional years between Satya Yuga and Treta Yuga, five hundred between Treta Yuga and Dvapara Yuga of two hundred and Kali Yuga of one hundred. There will therefore be seven hundred additional years between Satya Yuga and Treta Yuga, five hundred between Treta Yuga and Dvapara Yuga, three hundred between Dvapara Yuga and Kali Yuga and five hundred between Kali Yuga and the next Satya Yuga. These are two thousand additional years, and when added up to the earlier figure of ten thousand, make up twelve thousand years.

There are a little over seventy-one manvantaras (eras) in each mahayuga. Each manvantara is a time period that is ruled over by a Manu. The first Manu in the present kalpa (cycle) was Svayambhuva Manu and there were several other Manus after him. Each kalpa in fact passes during one of brahma's days and there are fourteen manvantaras in a kalpa. Stated differently, there are one thousand mahayugas in every kalpa.

Three hundred and sixty kalpas constitute one of Brahma's years. One hundred times this time period is known as a parardha. At the end of this period, the whole universe is destroyed and Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva are also destroyed. At the end of the destruction, creation starts afresh

and this creation is known as sarga.

There is a smaller process of destruction that takes place at the end of every kalpa. Brahma Vishnu and Shiva are not destroyed, but everything else is. The creation that comes at the end of this minor destruction is known as pratisarga.

The present kalpa is known as Varaha kalpa. The one that preceded it was known as padma kalpa.

"Why is the present kalpa called Varaha kalpa?" the gods and the sages asked Vishnu.

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The Boar Incarnation

A Varaha is a boar and the boar incarnation is usually catalogued as the third of Vishnu's ten incarnations.

When the universe was submerged in water after the destruction that came at the end of padma kalpa, Vishnu slept on the waters. Thus he slept for a thousand mahayugas. Since the word nara means water and ayana means resting-place, Vishnu is also referred to as Narayana.

Brahma decided to start creation afresh, but discovered that the earth was submerged in water. How would his creations survive if there was no earth? He therefore requested Vishnu to bring the earth up from under the water.

Vishnu adopted the form of a boar and went to the underworld. He discovered the earth there and raised her up on the tusks of the boar. The boar carefully raised the earth and laid her to rest on top of the water. The earth began to float like a gigantic boat.

Since Vishnu raised the earth in the form of a boar at the beginning of the kalpa, the present cycle is known as Varaha kalpa.

(The story of the boar incarnation is rather summarily disposed of in the Kurma Purana. The other Puranas describe it at great length. Apart from the question of raising up the earth from under the water, the story revolves around the demon Hiranyaksha. This demon was the son of the sage Kashyapa and his wife Diti. He defeated the gods and drove them out of heaven. In desperation, the gods started to pray to Vishnu. Hiranyaksha used to live under the water and Vishnu entered the water in his form of a boar and killed Hiranyaksha. He also recovered the Vedas which had been stolen by Hiranyaksha.)

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Creation continued

Brahma first created five sons through his mental powers. Their names were Sanaka, Sanatana, Sanandana, Kratu and Sanatakumara These five

sons became sages and did not have any offspring. Brahma therefore had to create some more beings so that the population of the universe might increase. But prior to that, he decided to perform tapasya. However, the meditation did not yield him any results and Brahma became very angry and disheartened. He started to weep and a teardrop fell on the ground. From this drop, there emerged Shiva.

Brahma bowed before Shiva and said, "Please create some living beings."

This Shiva proceeded to do. But all the beings that Shiva created were mirror images of himself. That is, they were all immortal.

"I beg your pardon," retorted Shiva. "That I refuse to do. Old age and disease are not objects that should be sought after. In fact, they are evil. I flatly refuse to create such evil."

"All right then." said Brahma. "I will take care of creation myself. Please stop creating."

The first objects that Brahma created were water, fire, the sky, heaven (svarga), wind, rivers, mountains, oceans, trees, herbs and time.

Brahma next created eleven sons from his mental powers. Their names were Marichi, Bhrigu, Angira, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu, Daksha, Atri Vashishtha, Dharma and Sankalpa.

(In the earlier section on varna ashrama dharma, only nine sons were mentioned. Dharma and Sankalpa did not figure in that list.)

Thereafter, Brahma created four classes of beings. These were gods, demons, ancestors (pitris) and humans. The demons were bom from Brahma's thighs, the gods from his mouth. The snakes (sarpa), the yakshas (demi-gods), the ghosts (bhuta) and the Gandharvas were born next. Cows were born from Brahms's stomach, and horses, elephants, donkeys, deer, camels and mules from his feet. Herbs and trees emerged from Brahms's body-hair.

(This account contradicts a more common account given in some of the other Puranas, such as the Bhagavata Purana. In the more usual account, all beings are descended from the sage Kashyapa. Kashyapa married

thirteen of Daksha's daughters. These daughters were named Aditi, Diti, Danu, Kashtha, Arishtha, Surasa, Ila, Muni, Krodhavasha, Tamra, Surabhi, Sarama and Timi. Aditi's offspring were the gods (adityas), Diti's the demons (daityas). Danu's offspring were other demons (danavas), Kashtha's children horses, Arishtha's gandharvas, Surasa's demons (Rakshasas), Ila's offspring trees and herbs, Muni's the apsaras (dancers of heaven), Krodhavasha's ghosts (pishachas), Tamra's birds, Surabhi's cattle, Sarama's wild animals and Timi's marine creatures. The Kurma Purana itself refers to this alternative account subsequently).

Creation continued

Brahma first created five sons through his mental powers. Their names were Sanaka, Sanatana, Sanandana, Kratu and Sanatakumara These five sons became sages and did not have any offspring. Brahma therefore had to create some more beings so that the population of the universe might increase. But prior to that, he decided to perform tapasya. However, the meditation did not yield him any results and Brahma became very angry and disheartened. He started to weep and a teardrop fell on the ground. From this drop, there emerged Shiva.

Brahma bowed before Shiva and said, "Please create some living beings."

This Shiva proceeded to do. But all the beings that Shiva created were mirror images of himself. That is, they were all immortal.

"I beg your pardon," retorted Shiva. "That I refuse to do. Old age and disease are not objects that should be sought after. In fact, they are evil. I flatly refuse to create such evil."

"All right then." said Brahma. "I will take care of creation myself. Please stop creating."

The first objects that Brahma created were water, fire, the sky, heaven (svarga), wind, rivers, mountains, oceans, trees, herbs and time.

Brahma next created eleven sons from his mental powers. Their names were Marichi, Bhrigu, Angira, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu, Daksha, Atri Vashishtha, Dharma and Sankalpa.

(In the earlier section on varna ashrama dharma, only nine sons were mentioned. Dharma and Sankalpa did not figure in that list.)

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(This account contradicts a more common account given in some of the other Puranas, such as the Bhagavata Purana. In the more usual account, all beings are descended from the sage Kashyapa. Kashyapa married thirteen of Daksha's daughters. These daughters were named Aditi, Diti, Danu, Kashtha, Arishtha, Surasa, Ila, Muni, Krodhavasha, Tamra, Surabhi, Sarama and Timi. Aditi's offspring were the gods (adityas), Diti's the demons (daityas). Danu's offspring were other demons (danavas), Kashtha's children horses, Arishtha's gandharvas, Surasa's demons (Rakshasas), Ila's offspring trees and herbs, Muni's the apsaras (dancers of heaven), Krodhavasha's ghosts (pishachas), Tamra's birds, Surabhi's cattle, Sarama's wild animals and Timi's marine creatures. The Kurma Purana itself refers to this alternative account subsequently).

To return to the present account of the Kurma Purana, Brahma thereafter divided his body into two. One half was male and was called Svayambhuva Manu. The remaining half was female and was called Shatarupa. Manu and Shatarupa married and had two sons and two

daughters. The sons were named Priyavrata and Uttanapada and the daughters were named Prasuti and Akuti. Since all humans are Manu's descendants, they are known as manava.

Prasuti married Daksha and they had twenty-four daughters. (The Puranas are not at all consistent about the number of daughters Prasuti and Daksha had. The number is sometimes twenty-four, sometimes fifty and sometimes sixty). Thirteen of the twenty-four daughters were married to Brahma's son Dharma. Of the remaining eleven, Khyati was married to Bhrigu, Sati to Shiva, Sambhuti to Marichi, Smriti to Angira, Priti to Pulastya, Kshama to Pulaha, Sannati to Kratu, Anasuya to Atri, Urjja to Vashishtha, Svaha to the fire-god Agni and Svadha to the ancestors (pitris).

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Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva

The gods and the sages told Vishnu, "We are getting a bit confused. You have told us that Brahma emerged from Vishnu's body. And yet you have

also told us how Brahma was born inside a golden egg. Which of these is the correct account? Then again, you have told us that Shiva was born from one of Brahma's tears. But we have sometimes heard otherwise. Which is right? Please remove this confusion."

"There is no confusion," replied Vishnu. "Let me explain it for you."

Brahma was born from the golden egg right at the beginning, at the time of the original creation. But at the end of every kalpa there is a minor destruction when all living beings other than Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva die. When the destruction is over, creation has to start afresh.

At the end of the last kalpa, there was water everywhere in the universe. The heaven, the earth and the underworld, were all flooded with water. There were no gods and no sages. Only the great Vishnu slept on the water. He had a thousand hoods, a thousand eyes, a thousand arms and a thousand feet. This was his form of Ananta, the snake (naga).

(The Kurma Purana completely identifies Vishnu with Ananta. More commonly, the Puranas state that the snake Ananta was the son of Kadru and the sage Kashyapa. He pleased Brahma through his prayers and obtained from Brahma the boon that he would be permitted to hold up the earth on his hoods. The Kalika Purana specifically states that, at the time of destruction, Vishnu and Lakshmi rest on Ananta's central hood. The Vishnu Purana adds the information that Ananta was one of Balarama's avataras. The names Shesha Vasuki and Gonasa are often used synonymously with Ananta.)

While Vishnu thus slept on the water, a wonderful lotus sprouted from his navel. The lotus was gigantic and shone like the sun. Its fragrance spread in all directions. Brahma appeared inside the lotus. Since padma means lotus and yoni means place of birth, Brahma is also known as Padmayoni.

Brahma saw Vishnu sleeping on the water and woke him up. "Who are you?" asked Brahma.

"I am Vishnu." replied Vishnu. "I am the origin of everything. That will be there in the universe is inside my body."

"Is that really so?" asked Vishnu. "Let me see."

Vishnu thereupon entered Brahma's body. He really found the three worlds, the gods, the demons and the humans inside Brahma's stomach and was greatly surprise. He emerged from Brahma's mouth and told Brahma, "What I have seen inside your body is truly wonderful. But I too can show you many worlds inside my body. Please enter and see for yourself."

It was now Brahma's turn to enter Vishnu's body. But when Brahma did this, he could find no end to Vishnu's stomach. It was true that there were many worlds inside Vishnu's body. However, Brahma could find no way of coming out from Vishnu's stomach. He finally started to emerge through Vishnu's navel, through the stalk of the lotus that was there.

"How dare you try to confine me inside your body?" demanded Brahma, as soon as he managed to get out.

Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva

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"How dare you try to confine me inside your body?" demanded Brahma, as soon as he managed to get out.

"Please do not get angry." replied Vishnu. "I merely thought that I would play with you for a while. Otherwise, it is inconceivable that anyone should dare to confine the great Brahma. Please pardon me. And as a token of your pardon, please grant me the boon that henceforth, you will

be known as my son. After all, you did emerge from a lotus that grew out of my navel."

"Agreed." said Brahma. "Let us make peace. After all; there is no one else. We are the lords of everything, we are parts of the Brahman."

"Please do not forget Shiva," responded Vishnu. "Your words will anger him and bring about your undoing."

While the two were thus conversing, Shiva appeared on the scene. He had a third eye in the middle of his forehead and his hair was matted. A trident could be seen in his hand.

"Who is this fellow?" asked Brahma. "He looks like an upstart."

Vishnu calmed Brahma down. He also gave Brahma divine eyes so that Brahma could comprehend the true nature of Shiva. Brahma then started to pray to Shiva. Pleased with Brahma's prayers, Shiva agreed to grant Brahma a boon.

"Please grant me the boon that you will be born as my son," said Brahma.

Shiva agreed to do so and went away.

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Rudra

Brahma returned to his seat on the lotus flower.

Suddenly, two demons named Madhu and Kaitabha appeared. They were exceedingly strong and threatened to destroy everything that Brahma would create. Brahma therefore requested Vishnu to kill these two demons. Vishnu created two beings from his own body and these two beings killed the demons.

(The Madhu and Kaitabha story is given in greater detail in other Puranas, such as the Kalika Purana. While Vishnu was sleeping, the two demons were born from his ears. One of them desired to have some honey as soon as he was born. Since the word for honey is madhu, he came to be known as Madhu. The other one looked like an insect. Since the word for insect is kita, he came to be known as Kaitabha. These brothers attacked Brahma and Vishnu had to fight with them so as to rescue Brahma. The fight went on for five thousand years before Vishnu could kill them. After the demons were killed, the fat (meda) from their bodies formed the earth. That is the reason why the earth is known as medini.

After Madhu and Kaitabha had been killed, Brahma could start to create. He first created, through his mental powers, the sons whose names have earlier been mentioned. Since Shiva had promised that he would be bom as Brahma's son, Brahma decided to perform tapasya so as to accomplish this. He prayed for many years, but nothing happened. In utter frustration, Brahma began to cry. The ghosts (bhuta and preta) were bom from these tears. Brahma was so disgusted at having created these awful creatures, that he committed suicide. It was then that Shiva was bom from Brahma's mouth and Brahma revived.

(You will have noticed the contradiction. Earlier, it had been stated that Shiva was born from a teardrop and there had been no mention of Brahma's suicide. The suicide is not mentioned in other Puranas either, nor is there any mention of Shiva or Rudra being bom from a teardrop. In the Vishnu Purana, he suddenly appeared in Brahma's lap. In the Padma Purana, he was born from Brahma's furrowed brows).

The baby started to cry as soon as he was born.

"Don't cry," said Brahma. "Since you cried when you were born, you will be known as Rudra."

(The Kurma Purana is not specific on why the baby cried. The other Puranas state that the baby cried for the want of a name. Brahma therefore gave the boy the name of Rudra, as the word rub means to cry. The boy continued to cry and Brahma gave him several other names as well. The Puranas however disagree about what these various names were).

In addition to Rudra, Brahma gave the boy the names Bhuva, Sarva, Ishana, Pashupati, Bhima, Ugra and Mahadeva. In these eight different forms, Shiva was to live in the sun, the water, the sky, the fire, the wind, the trees, the bodies of brahmanas and the moon.

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Parvati's Thousand Names

Shiva was married to Daksha's daughter Sati. Sati died and was reborn as Parvati, the daughter of Himalaya and his wife Mena (alternatively,

Menaka). Parvati was married to Shiva.

In fact, Himalaya and Mena prayed so that they might have the goddess as their daughter. Pleased with their prayers, the goddess arrived before Himalaya and Mena and showed them her divine form. She also promised them that she would be born as their daughter.

There were a thousand names of the goddess that Himalaya recited in the course of his prayers (one thousand and eight to be precise). These names are as follows. For convenience, we have reproduced them in groups of ten names each.

(1) Shiva, Uma, Paramashakti, Ananta, Nishkala, Amala, Shanta, Maheshvari, Nitya, Shashvati.

(2) Paramakshara, Achintya, Kevala, Shivatma, Paramatma, Anadi, Avyaya, Shuddha, Devatma, Sarvaga,

(3) Achala, Eka, Anekavibhagastha, Mayatita, Sunirmala, Mahamaheshvari, Satya, Mahadevai, Niranjana, Kashtha.

(4) Sarvantarastha, Chitshakti, Atilalasa, Nanda, Sarvvatmika, Vidya, Jyotirupa Amrita, Akshara, Shanti.

(5) Sarvvapratishtha, Nivritti, Amritaprada. Vyomamurti, Vyomalaya, Vyomadhara, Achyuta, Amara, Andinidhana, Amogha.

(6) Karanatma, Kalakula, Svatahprathamaja, Amritanabhi, Atmasamshraya, Praneshvarapriya, Mata, Mahamahishaghatini, Pranarupa, Pradhana-Purushaeshvari.

(7) Sarvvashakti, Kalakara, Jyotsna, Sarvvakaryaniyantri, Sarvvabhuteshvari, Samsarayoni, Sakala, Sarvvashaktisamudbhava, Samsarapota, Durvara.

(8) Dumirikshya, Durasada, Pranashakti, Pranavidya, Yogini, Paramakala, Mahavibhuti, Durddharsha, Mulaprakritidsambhava.

(9) Anadyanantavitava, Paramaghapakarshini, Svargasthityan Tarakarani, Sudurvvachya, Duratyaya, Shabdayoni, Shabdamayi,

Nadakhya, Nadvigraha, Anadi.

(10) Avyaktaguna, Mahanada, Sanatani, Akashayoni, Yogastha, Mahayogeshvareshvari, Mahamaya, Sudushpara, Mulaprakriti, Ishvari.

(11) Pradhana Purushatita, Pradhana Purushatmika, Purana, Chinmayi, Adi Purusharupini, Bhutantavastha, Kutastha, Maha Purushasamjnita, Janmamrityujaratita, Sarvvashaktisamanvita.

(12) Vyapini, Anavachhinna, Pradhananu Praveshinin, Kshetrajnashakti, Avyaktalakshana, Malavarjjita, Anadimayasambinna, Prakritigraha, Mahamayasamutpanna, Tamasi.

(13) Pourushi, Dheuva, Vyaktatmika, Krishna, Avyaktatmika, Rrakta, Shukla, Prasutika, Akarya, Karyajanani.

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(3) Achala, Eka, Anekavibhagastha, Mayatita, Sunirmala, Mahamaheshvari, Satya, Mahadevai, Niranjana, Kashtha.

(4) Sarvantarastha, Chitshakti, Atilalasa, Nanda, Sarvvatmika, Vidya, Jyotirupa Amrita, Akshara, Shanti.

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(6) Karanatma, Kalakula, Svatahprathamaja, Amritanabhi, Atmasamshraya, Praneshvarapriya, Mata, Mahamahishaghatini, Pranarupa, Pradhana-Purushaeshvari.

(7) Sarvvashakti, Kalakara, Jyotsna, Sarvvakaryaniyantri, Sarvvabhuteshvari, Samsarayoni, Sakala, Sarvvashaktisamudbhava, Samsarapota, Durvara.

(8) Durnirikshya, Durasada, Pranashakti, Pranavidya, Yogini, Paramakala, Mahavibhuti, Durddharsha, Mulaprakritidsambhava.

(9) Anadyanantavitava, Paramaghapakarshini, Svargasthityan Tarakarani, Sudurvvachya, Duratyaya, Shabdayoni, Shabdamayi, Nadakhya, Nadvigraha, Anadi.

(10) Avyaktaguna, Mahanada, Sanatani, Akashayoni, Yogastha, Mahayogeshvareshvari, Mahamaya, Sudushpara, Mulaprakriti, Ishvari.

(11) Pradhana Purushatita, Pradhana Purushatmika, Purana, Chinmayi, Adi Purusharupini, Bhutantavastha, Kutastha, Maha Purushasamjnita, Janmamrityujaratita, Sarvvashaktisamanvita.

(12) Vyapini, Anavachhinna, Pradhananu Praveshinin, Kshetrajnashakti, Avyaktalakshana, Malavarjjita, Anadimayasambinna, Prakritigraha, Mahamayasamutpanna, Tamasi.

(13) Pourushi, Dheuva, Vyaktatmika, Krishna, Avyaktatmika, Rrakta, Shukla, Prasutika, Akarya, Karyajanani.

(14) Nityaprasavadharmini, SargaPralayanirmukta, Srishtisthityantadharmini, Brahmagarbha, Chaturvimsha, Padmanabha, Achyutatmika, Vaidyuti, Shashvati, Youni.

(15) Jaganmata, Ishvarapriya, Sarvvadhara, Maharupa, Sarvvaisharyasamannita, Vishvarupa, Mahagarbha, Vishveshechhanuvartini, Mahlyasi, Brahmayoni.

(16) Mahalakshmisamudbhava, Maha Vimana-Madhyastha, Mahanidra, Atmahetuka, Sarvva-Sadharani, Sukshma, Avidya, Paramarthiki, Anantarupa, Anantastha.

(17) Purushamohini, Devi, Anekakarasamsthana, Kalatrayavivaijita, Brahmajanma, Harimurti, Brahmakhya, Brahmavishnu-Shivatmika, Brahmeshavishnujanani, Brahmasamshraya.

(18) Vyakta, Prathamaja, Brahmi, Mahati, Brahmarupini. Vairagyaishvaryadharmatma. Brahmamurti, Hridisthita, Apamyoni, Svayambhuti.

(19) Manasi, Tattvasambhava, Ishvarani, Sarvvani, Shankararddhasharbini, Bhavani, Rudrani, Mahalakshmi, Ambika, Maheshvara-Samutpanna.

(20) Bhuktimuktifalaprada, Sarvveshvari, Sarvvavandya, Nitamuditamanasa, Brahmendro-

Pendranmita, Shankarechhanuvartini, Ishvararddhasanagata, Maheshvarapativrata,

Sakridvibhata, Sarvvartisamudraparishoshini.

(21) Parvati, Himavatputri, Paramanadadyini, Gunadhya, Yogaja, Yogya, Jnanamurti, Vikashini, Savitri, Kamala.

(22) Lakshmi, Sri, Anantavakshahsthalasthita, Sarojanilaya, Ganga, Yoganidra, Asurardini Sarasvati, Sarvvavidya, Jagajjveyashtha.

(23) Sumangala, Vagdevi Varada, Avachya Kirti, Sarvvarthasadhika, Yogishvari, Brahmavidya, Mahavidya, Sushobhana.

(24) Guhyavidya, Atmavidya, Dharmavidya,Atmabhavita, Svaha, Vishvambhara, Siddhi, Svadha, Medha, Dhriti.

(25) Shruti, Niti, Suniti, Sukriti, Madhavi, Naravahini, Pujya, Vibhavati, Soumya, Bhogini.

(26) Bhogashayini, Shobha, Vamshakari, Lola, Manini, Paramaeshthini, Trailokyasundari, Ramaya, Sundari, Kamacharini.

(27) Mahanubhava, Sattvastha, Mahamahisha-Mardini, Padmamala, Papahara, Vichitramaukutangada, Kanta, Chitramabaradhara, Divyabharana-Bhushita.

(28) Hamsakhya, Vyomanilaya, Jagasrishtivivarddhini, Niyantri, Yantramadhyastha, Nandini, Bhadrakalika, Adityavarna, Koumari.

(14) Nityaprasavadharmini, SargaPralayanirmukta, Srishtisthityantadharmini, Brahmagarbha, Chaturvimsha, Padmanabha, Achyutatmika, Vaidyuti, Shashvati, Youni.

(15) Jaganmata, Ishvarapriya, Sarvvadhara, Maharupa, Sarvvaisharyasamannita, Vishvarupa, Mahagarbha, Vishveshechhanuvartini, Mahlyasi, Brahmayoni.

(16) Mahalakshmisamudbhava, Maha Vimana-Madhyastha, Mahanidra, Atmahetuka, Sarvva-Sadharani, Sukshma, Avidya, Paramarthiki, Anantarupa, Anantastha.

(17) Purushamohini, Devi, Anekakarasamsthana, Kalatrayavivarjita, Brahmajanma, Harimurti, Brahmakhya, Brahmavishnu-Shivatmika, Brahmeshavishnujanani, Brahmasamshraya.

(18) Vyakta, Prathamaja, Brahmi, Mahati, Brahmarupini. Vairagyaishvaryadharmatma. Brahmamurti, Hridisthita, Apamyoni, Svayambhuti.

(19) Manasi, Tattvasambhava, Ishvarani, Sarvvani, Shankararddhasharirini, Bhavani, Rudrani, Mahalakshmi, Ambika, Maheshvara-Samutpanna.

(20) Bhuktimuktifalaprada, Sarvveshvari, Sarvvavandya, Nitamuditamanasa, Brahmendro-Pendranmita, Shankarechhanuvartini, Ishvararddhasanagata, Maheshvarapativrata, Sakridvibhata, Sarvvartisamudraparishoshini.

(21) Parvati, Himavatputri, Paramanadadyini, Gunadhya, Yogaja, Yogya, Jnanamurti, Vikashini, Savitri, Kamala.

(22) Lakshmi, Sri, Anantavakshahsthalasthita, Sarojanilaya, Ganga, Yoganidra, Asurardini Sarasvati, Sarvvavidya, Jagajjveyashtha.

(23) Sumangala, Vagdevi Varada, Avachya Kirti, Sarvvarthasadhika, Yogishvari, Brahmavidya, Mahavidya, Sushobhana.

(24) Guhyavidya, Atmavidya, Dharmavidya,Atmabhavita, Svaha, Vishvambhara, Siddhi, Svadha, Medha, Dhriti.

(25) Shruti, Niti, Suniti, Sukriti, Madhavi, Naravahini, Pujya, Vibhavati, Soumya, Bhogini.

(26) Bhogashayini, Shobha, Vamshakari, Lola, Manini, Paramaeshthini, Trailokyasundari, Ramaya, Sundari, Kamacharini.

(27) Mahanubhava, Sattvastha, Mahamahisha-Mardini, Padmamala, Papahara, Vichitramaukutangada, Kanta, Chitramabaradhara, Divyabharana-Bhushita.

(28) Hamsakhya, Vyomanilaya, Jagasrishtivivarddhini, Niyantri, Yantramadhyastha, Nandini, Bhadrakalika, Adityavarna, Koumari.

(29) Mayuravaravahana, Vrishasanagata, Gouri, Mahakali, Surarchita, Aditi, Niyata, Roudri, Padmagarbhavivahana.

(30) Virupakshi, Lelihana, Mahasuravinashini, Mahafala, Anavadyangi,

Kamarupa, Vibhavari, Koushiki, Vichitraratnamukuta, Pranatarti-Prabhanjani.

(31) Karshani, Ratri, Tridashartivinashini, Vahurupa, Virupa, Surupa, Rupavarjita, Bhaktartishamani, Bhavya, Bhavatapavinashini.

(32) Nirguna, Nityavibhava, Nihsara, Nirapatrapa, Tapasvini, Samagiti, Bhavankanilayalaya, Diksha, Vidyadhari, Dipta.

(33) Manendrarinipatini, Sarvvatishayini, Vidya, Sarvvasiddhipradyini, Sarvveshvarapriya, Tarkshi, Samudrantaravasini, Akalanka, Niradhara.

(34) Nityashiddha, Niramaya, Kamadhenu, Vrihadgarbha, Dhimati, Mohanashini, Nihsankalpa, Niratanka, Vinaya.

(35) Vinayapriya, Jvalamalasahasradhya, Devadevi, Manomayi, Mahabhagavati, Bhaga, Vasudevasamudbhava, Mahendrapendrabhagini.

(36) Bhaktigamya, Paravara, Jnanajneya, Jaratita, Vedantavishaya, Gati, Dakshaina, Dahana, Danta, Sarvvabhutanamaskrita.

(37) Yoganmaya, Vibhagajna, Mahamoha, Gariyasi, Sandhya, Brahmavidyashraya,

Vijankurasamudhbuti, Mahashakti, Mahamati, Kshanti.

(38) Prajna, Chiti, Samvit, Mahabhogindra-Shayini, Vikriti, Shankari, Shanti,

Ganagandharvasevita, Vaishvanari, Mahashala.

(39) Devasena, Guhapriya, Maharatri, Shivananda, Shachi, Duhsvapnanashini, Ijya, Pujya, Jagaddhatri, Durvineya.

(40) Surpini, Guhalvika, Gunotpatti, Mahapitha, Marutsuta, Havyavahantaragadi, Havyavahasa-Mudhbhava, Jagadyoni, Jaganmata, Janmamrityujaratiga.

(41) Vuddhi, Mahavuddhimati, Purushantaravasini, Tarasvini, Samadhistha, Trinetra, Divisamsthita, Sarvvendriyamanomata,

Sarvvabhutahridisthita, Samsaratarini.

(42) Sattvashuddhikari, Shuddhi, Malatrayavinashini, Jagatpriya, Jaganmurti, Trimurti, Amritashraya, Nirashraya, Nirahara, Nirankushapododbhava.

(43) Surupa, Bhavini, Harini, Prabha, Unmilani, Sarvasaha, Sarvvapratyayasakshini, Susoumya, Chandravadana, Tandavasaktamanasa.

(29) Mayuravaravahana, Vrishasanagata, Gouri, Mahakali, Surarchita, Aditi, Niyata, Roudri, Padmagarbhavivahana.

(30) Virupakshi, Lelihana, Mahasuravinashini, Mahafala, Anavadyangi, Kamarupa, Vibhavari, Koushiki, Vichitraratnamukuta, Pranatarti-Prabhanjani.

(31) Karshani, Ratri, Tridashartivinashini, Vahurupa, Virupa, Surupa, Rupavarjita, Bhaktartishamani, Bhavya, Bhavatapavinashini.

(32) Nirguna, Nityavibhava, Nihsara, Nirapatrapa, Tapasvini, Samagiti, Bhavankanilayalaya, Diksha, Vidyadhari, Dipta.

(33) Manendrarinipatini, Sarvvatishayini, Vidya, Sarvvasiddhipradyini, Sarvveshvarapriya, Tarkshi, Samudrantaravasini, Akalanka, Niradhara.

(34) Nityashiddha, Niramaya, Kamadhenu, Vrihadgarbha, Dhimati, Mohanashini, Nihsankalpa, Niratanka, Vinaya.

(35) Vinayapriya, Jvalamalasahasradhya, Devadevi, Manomayi, Mahabhagavati, Bhaga, Vasudevasamudbhava, Mahendrapendrabhagini.

(36) Bhaktigamya, Paravara, Jnanajneya, Jaratita, Vedantavishaya, Gati, Dakshaina, Dahana, Danta, Sarvvabhutanamaskrita.

(37) Yoganmaya, Vibhagajna, Mahamoha, Gariyasi, Sandhya, Brahmavidyashraya, Vijankurasamudhbuti, Mahashakti, Mahamati, Kshanti.

(38) Prajna, Chiti, Samvit, Mahabhogindra-Shayini, Vikriti, Shankari, Shanti, Ganagandharvasevita, Vaishvanari, Mahashala.

(39) Devasena, Guhapriya, Maharatri, Shivananda, Shachi, Duhsvapnanashini, Ijya, Pujya, Jagaddhatri, Durvineya.

(40) Surpini, Guhalvika, Gunotpatti, Mahapitha, Marutsuta, Havyavahantaragadi, Havyavahasa-Mudhbhava, Jagadyoni, Jaganmata, Janmamrityujaratiga.

(41) Vuddhi, Mahavuddhimati, Purushantaravasini, Tarasvini, Samadhistha, Trinetra, Divisamsthita, Sarvvendriyamanomata, Sarvvabhutahridisthita, Samsaratarini.

(42) Sattvashuddhikari, Shuddhi, Malatrayavinashini, Jagatpriya, Jaganmurti, Trimurti, Amritashraya, Nirashraya, Nirahara, Nirankushapododbhava.

(43) Surupa, Bhavini, Harini, Prabha, Unmilani, Sarvasaha, Sarvvapratyayasakshini, Susoumya, Chandravadana, Tandavasaktamanasa.

(44) Sativashuddhikari, Shuddhi, Malatrayavinashini, Jagatpriya, Jaganmurti, Trimurti, Amritashya, Nirashraya, Nirahara, Nirankushapadodbhava.

(45) Chakrahasta, Viochitrangi, Sragvini, Padmadharini, Paravaravidhanajna, Mahapuushapurvaja, Vishveshvarapriya, Vidyut, Vidyujjihva, Jitashrama.

(46) Vidyamayi, Sahasrakshi, Sahasravadanatmaja, Sahasrarashmi, Sattvastha, Maheshvarapadashraya, Kshalini, Mrinmayi, Vyapta, Padmavodhika.

(47) Taijasi, Mahamayashraya, Manya, Mahadevamanaorama, Vyomalakshmi, Simharatha, Chekitana, Amitaprabha, Vireshvari, Vimanastha.

(48) Vishoka, Shokanashini, Anahata, Kundalini, Nalini, Padmabhasini, Sadananda, Sadakriti, Vagdevata, Sarvvabhutashrayasthita.

(49) Brahmakala, Vishnushivagraja, Paragati, Kshobhika, Bandhika, Bhedya,

Bhedabhedavivarjita, Kalalita, Kalarani.

(50) BrahmaSri, Brahmahridaya, Vyomashakti, Kriyashakti, Jamashakti, Abhinna, Bhinnasamsthana, Vashini, Vamshakarini, Guhyashakti.

(51) Gunatita, Sarvada, Sarvatomukhi, Bhagini, Bhagavatpatni, Sakala, Kalakarini, Sarvvavit, Sarvvatobhadra.

(52) Guhyatita, Guharani, Prakriya, Yogamata, Ganga, Vishveshareshvari, Kapila, Akapila, Kanta, Kamalabha.

(53) Kalantara, Punya, Pushkarini, Bhoktri, Puranadarapurahsara, Poshani, Paramaishvaryabhutida, Bhutibhushana, Panchabrahmasamutpatti.

(54) Paramarthavigraha, Dharmodaya, Bhanumati, Yogijneya, Manojava, Manorama,

Manoraska, Tapasi, Vadarupini, Vedashakti.

(55) Vedamata, Vedavidyaprakashini, Yogeshvareshvari, Mata, Mahashakti, Manomayi, , Viyanmurti, Vidyunmala, Vihayasi.

(56) Kinnari, Surabhi, Vidya, Nandini, Nandivallabha, Bharatai, Paramananda, Paraparavibhedika, Sarvvapraharanopeta, Kamya.

(57) Kameshvareshvari, Achintya, Anantavibhava, Bhulekha, Kanakaprabha, Kushmandi, Dhanaratnadhya, Sugandha, Gandhadayini, Trivikramapadodbhuta.

(58) Dhanushpani, Shivodaya, Sudurlabla, Dhanadhyaksha, Dhanya, Pingalalochana, Shanti, Prabhavati, Dipti, Pankajayatalochana.

(44) Sativashuddhikari, Shuddhi, Malatrayavinashini, Jagatpriya, Jaganmurti, Trimurti, Amritashya, Nirashraya, Nirahara, Nirankushapadodbhava.

(45) Chakrahasta, Viochitrangi, Sragvini, Padmadharini, Paravaravidhanajna, Mahapuushapurvaja, Vishveshvarapriya, Vidyut, Vidyujjihva, Jitashrama.

(46) Vidyamayi, Sahasrakshi, Sahasravadanatmaja, Sahasrarashmi, Sattvastha, Maheshvarapadashraya, Kshalini, Mrinmayi, Vyapta, Padmavodhika.

(47) Taijasi, Mahamayashraya, Manya, Mahadevamanaorama, Vyomalakshmi, Simharatha, Chekitana, Amitaprabha, Vireshvari, Vimanastha.

(48) Vishoka, Shokanashini, Anahata, Kundalini, Nalini, Padmabhasini, Sadananda, Sadakriti, Vagdevata, Sarvvabhutashrayasthita.

(49) Brahmakala, Vishnushivagraja, Paragati, Kshobhika, Bandhika, Bhedya, Bhedabhedavivarjita, Kalalita, Kalarani.

(50) BrahmaSri, Brahmahridaya, Vyomashakti, Kriyashakti, Jamashakti, Abhinna, Bhinnasamsthana, Vashini, Vamshakarini, Guhyashakti.

(51) Gunatita, Sarvada, Sarvatomukhi, Bhagini, Bhagavatpatni, Sakala, Kalakarini, Sarvvavit, Sarvvatobhadra.

(52) Guhyatita, Guharani, Prakriya, Yogamata, Ganga, Vishveshareshvari, Kapila, Akapila, Kanta, Kamalabha.

(53) Kalantara, Punya, Pushkarini, Bhoktri, Puranadarapurahsara, Poshani, Paramaishvaryabhutida, Bhutibhushana, Panchabrahmasamutpatti.

(54) Paramarthavigraha, Dharmodaya, Bhanumati, Yogijneya, Manojava, Manorama, Manoraska, Tapasi, Vadarupini, Vedashakti.

(55) Vedamata, Vedavidyaprakashini, Yogeshvareshvari, Mata, Mahashakti, Manomayi, , Viyanmurti, Vidyunmala, Vihayasi.

(56) Kinnari, Surabhi, Vidya, Nandini, Nandivallabha, Bharatai, Paramananda, Paraparavibhedika, Sarvvapraharanopeta, Kamya.

(57) Kameshvareshvari, Achintya, Anantavibhava, Bhulekha, Kanakaprabha, Kushmandi, Dhanaratnadhya, Sugandha, Gandhadayini, Trivikramapadodbhuta.

(58) Dhanushpani, Shivodaya, Sudurlabla, Dhanadhyaksha, Dhanya, Pingalalochana, Shanti, Prabhavati, Dipti, Pankajayatalochana.

(59) Adya, Hritamalodbhuta, Gomata, Ranapriya, Satkriya, Girisha, Shuddhi, Nityapushta, Nirantara, Durga.

(60) Katyayani, Chandi, Charichitanga, Suvigraha, Hiranyavarna, Jagati,

Jagadyantrapravartika, Sarada, Mandaradrinivasa, Svamamalini.

(61) Ratnamala, Ratnagarbha, Pushti, Vishvapramathini, Padmanana, Padmanibha, Nityatushta, Amritodbhava, Dhunvati, Dushprakampa.

(62) Suryamata, Drishadvati, Mahendrabhagini, Soumya, Varenya, Varadayika, Kalyani, Kamalavasa, Panchachuda, Varaprada.

(63) Vachya, Amareshvari, Vandhya, Durjjaya, Duratikrama, Kalaratri, Mahabega, Virabhadrapriya, Hita, Bhadrakali.

(64) Jaganmata, Bhaktamangaladayini, Karala, Pingalakara, Kamabheda, Mahasvana, Yashasvini, Yashoda, Shadadhvaparivartika, Shankhini.

(65) Padmini, Sankhya, Samkhyayogapravartika, Chaitra, Samvatsararuda, Jagatsampuranai, Indraja, Shumbhari, Khechari, Khastha.

(66) Kamburgriva, Kalipriya, Khagadhvaja, Khagaruda, Varahai, Pugamalini, Aishvaryapadmanilaya, Virakta, Garudasana, Jayanti.

(67) Hridguhagamya, Shankareshtaganagrani, Samyastha, Sankalpasiddha, Sarvvavijnandayini, Kalikalkavihantrui, Guhyanpanishaduttama, Nishtha, Drishti.

(68) Smriti, Vyapi, Pushti, Tushti, Kriyavati, Vishvamareshvasreshana, Bhukti, Mukti, Shiva, Amrita.

(69) Lohitasarpamala, Bhisani, Naramalini, Anantashayana, Ananta, Naranarayanodbhava, Nrisimhi, Daityamathini, Shankachakragadadhara, Ambika.

(70) Sankarshanasamutpatti, Padasamshrava, Mahajvala, Mahabhuti, Sumurti, Sarvvakamadhuka, Suprabha, Sustani, Souri, Dharmakamarthamokshada.

(71) Bhrumadhyanilaya, Purva, PuranaPurusharani, Mahavibhutida, Madhya, Sarojanayana, Sama, Anadya, Nilotpaladalaprabha, Asthadashabhuja.

(72) Sarvvashaktyasanaruda, Dharmadharmavivarjita, Vairagyajnananirata, Niraloka, Nirindriya, Vichitragahanadhara, Shvashvatasthanavasini, Sthaneshvari, Nirananda, Trishulavaradharini.

(73) Asheshadevatamurti, Devatavaradevata, Ganambika, Giriputri, Nishumbhavinipatini, Avama, Vamarahita, Trivarna, Jivasambhava, Anantavama.

(59) Adya, Hritamalodbhuta, Gomata, Ranapriya, Satkriya, Girisha, Shuddhi, Nityapushta, Nirantara, Durga.

(60) Katyayani, Chandi, Charichitanga, Suvigraha, Hiranyavarna, Jagati, Jagadyantrapravartika, Sarada, Mandaradrinivasa, Svarnamalini.

(61) Ratnamala, Ratnagarbha, Pushti, Vishvapramathini, Padmanana, Padmanibha, Nityatushta, Amritodbhava, Dhunvati, Dushprakampa.

(62) Suryamata, Drishadvati, Mahendrabhagini, Soumya, Varenya, Varadayika, Kalyani, Kamalavasa, Panchachuda, Varaprada.

(63) Vachya, Amareshvari, Vandhya, Durjjaya, Duratikrama, Kalaratri, Mahabega, Virabhadrapriya, Hita, Bhadrakali.

(64) Jaganmata, Bhaktamangaladayini, Karala, Pingalakara, Kamabheda, Mahasvana, Yashasvini, Yashoda, Shadadhvaparivartika, Shankhini.

(65) Padmini, Sankhya, Samkhyayogapravartika, Chaitra, Samvatsararuda, Jagatsampuranai, Indraja, Shumbhari, Khechari, Khastha.

(66) Kamburgriva, Kalipriya, Khagadhvaja, Khagaruda, Varahai, Pugamalini, Aishvaryapadmanilaya, Virakta, Garudasana, Jayanti.

(67) Hridguhagamya, Shankareshtaganagrani, Samyastha, Sankalpasiddha, Sarvvavijnandayini, Kalikalkavihantrui, Guhyanpanishaduttama, Nishtha, Drishti.

(68) Smriti, Vyapi, Pushti, Tushti, Kriyavati, Vishvamareshvasreshana, Bhukti, Mukti, Shiva, Amrita.

(69) Lohitasarpamala, Bhisani, Naramalini, Anantashayana, Ananta, Naranarayanodbhava, Nrisimhi, Daityamathini, Shankachakragadadhara, Ambika.

(70) Sankarshanasamutpatti, Padasamshrava, Mahajvala, Mahabhuti, Sumurti, Sarvvakamadhuka, Suprabha, Sustani, Souri, Dharmakamarthamokshada.

(71) Bhrumadhyanilaya, Purva, PuranaPurusharani, Mahavibhutida, Madhya, Sarojanayana, Sama, Anadya, Nilotpaladalaprabha, Asthadashabhuja.

(72) Sarvvashaktyasanaruda, Dharmadharmavivarjita, Vairagyajnananirata, Niraloka, Nirindriya, Vichitragahanadhara, Shvashvatasthanavasini, Sthaneshvari, Nirananda, Trishulavaradharini.

(73) Asheshadevatamurti, Devatavaradevata, Ganambika, Giriputri, Nishumbhavinipatini, Avarna, Varnarahita, Trivarna, Jivasambhava, Anantavarna.

(74) Ananyastha, Shankari, Shantamanasa, Agotra, Gomati, Goptri, Guhyarupa, Gunottara, Go, Gih.

(75) Govyapriya, Gouni, Ganeshvaranamaskrita, Satyabhama,

Satyasandha, Trisandhya, Sandhivarjita, Sarvvavadashraya, Samkhya, Samkhyayogasamudbhava.

(76) Asamkhyeya, Apramaeyakhya, Shunya, Suddakulodbhava, Vindunadasamutpatti, Shambhuvasa, Shashiprabha, Pishanga, Bhedarahita, Manojna.

(77) Madhusudani, MahaSri, Srisamutapatti, Tamohparepratishthita, Tritattvamata, Trividha, Susukshmapadasamshraya, Shantyatita, Malatita, Nirvikara.

(78) Nirashraya, Shivakhya, Chittanilaya, Kashyapai, Shivajnanasvarupini, Daityadanavanirmukhi, Kalakarnika, Shastrayoni, Kriyamurti, Chatruvargapradarshika.

(79) Narayani, Narodbhuti, Koumudi, Lingadharini, Karmuki, Kalita, Bhava, Paravaravibhutida, Vadava, Pararddhajatamahima.

(80) Vamalochana, Subhadra, Devaki, Sita, Manasvini, Vedavedangaparaga, Manyumata, Mahamanyusamundbhava, Amanyu, Amritasvada.

(81) Puruhuta, Purushatuta, Ashouchya, Bhinnavishaya, Hiranyarajatapriya, Hiranyarajani, Haimi, Hemabharanabhushita, Vibhrajamana, Durjneya.

(82) Jyotishtomafalaprada, Mahnidrasamudbhyuti, Anidra, Satyadevata, Dirgha, Kakudmini, Hridya, Shantida, Shantivarddhini, Lakshyadishaktijanani.

(83) Shaktichakrapravartika, Trishaktijanani, Janya, Shadurmiparivarjita, Sudhama, Karmakarani, Yugantadahanatmika, Sankarshini, Jagaddhatri, Kamayoni.

(84) Kiritini, Aindri, Trailokyanamita, Vaishnavi, Paramaeshvari, Pradyumnadayita, Datri, Yugamadrishti, Trilochana, Madotkata.

(85) Hamsagati, Prachanda, Chandavikrama, Vrishavesha, Vishyanmatra, Vindhyaparvatavasini, Himavanmerunilaya, Kailasagirivasini, Chanurahantritanaya, Nitijna.

(86) Kamarupini, Vedavedya, Vratasnata, Brahmashailanivasini, Virabhadrapraja, Vira, Siddha, Mahakamas amudbhava, Vidyanadharanirakriti.

(87) Apyayani, Haranti, Pavani, Poshani, Kala, Matrika, Manmathodbhuta, Varija, Vahanapriya, Sudha.

(88) Karishini, Vani, Vinavadanatatpara, Sevita, Sevika, Sevya, Garudatmati, Arundhati, Hiranyakshi.

(74) Ananyastha, Shankari, Shantamanasa, Agotra, Gomati, Goptri, Guhyarupa, Gunottara, Go, Gih.

(75) Govyapriya, Gouni, Ganeshvaranamaskrita, Satyabhama, Satyasandha, Trisandhya, Sandhivarjita, Sarvvavadashraya, Samkhya, Samkhyayogasamudbhava.

(76) Asamkhyeya, Apramaeyakhya, Shunya, Suddakulodbhava, Vindunadasamutpatti, Shambhuvasa, Shashiprabha, Pishanga, Bhedarahita, Manojna.

(77) Madhusudani, MahaSri, Srisamutapatti, Tamohparepratishthita, Tritattvamata, Trividha, Susukshmapadasamshraya, Shantyatita, Malatita, Nirvikara.

(78) Nirashraya, Shivakhya, Chittanilaya, Kashyapai, Shivajnanasvarupini, Daityadanavanirmukhi, Kalakarnika, Shastrayoni, Kriyamurti, Chatruvargapradarshika.

(79) Narayani, Narodbhuti, Koumudi, Lingadharini, Karmuki, Kalita, Bhava, Paravaravibhutida, Vadava, Pararddhajatamahima.

(80) Vamalochana, Subhadra, Devaki, Sita, Manasvini, Vedavedangaparaga, Manyumata, Mahamanyusamundbhava, Amanyu, Amritasvada.

(81) Puruhuta, Purushatuta, Ashouchya, Bhinnavishaya, Hiranyarajatapriya, Hiranyarajani, Haimi, Hemabharanabhushita, Vibhrajamana, Durjneya.

(82) Jyotishtomafalaprada, Mahnidrasamudbhyuti, Anidra, Satyadevata, Dirgha, Kakudmini, Hridya, Shantida, Shantivarddhini, Lakshyadishaktijanani.

(83) Shaktichakrapravartika, Trishaktijanani, Janya, Shadurmiparivarjita, Sudhama, Karmakarani, Yugantadahanatmika, Sankarshini, Jagaddhatri, Kamayoni.

(84) Kiritini, Aindri, Trailokyanamita, Vaishnavi, Paramaeshvari, Pradyumnadayita, Datri, Yugamadrishti, Trilochana, Madotkata.

(85) Hamsagati, Prachanda, Chandavikrama, Vrishavesha, Vishyanmatra, Vindhyaparvatavasini, Himavanmerunilaya, Kailasagirivasini, Chanurahantritanaya, Nitijna.

(86) Kamarupini, Vedavedya, Vratasnata, Brahmashailanivasini, Virabhadrapraja, Vira, Siddha, Mahakamasamudbhava, Vidyanadharanirakriti.

(87) Apyayani, Haranti, Pavani, Poshani, Kala, Matrika, Manmathodbhuta, Varija, Vahanapriya, Sudha.

(88) Karishini, Vani, Vinavadanatatpara, Sevita, Sevika, Sevya, Garudatmati, Arundhati, Hiranyakshi.

(89) Mrigakshi, Manadayini, Vasuprada, Vasumati, Vasudhara, Vasundhara, Dharadhara, Vararoha, Characharasahsrada, Srifala.

(90) Srimati, Srisha, Srinivasa, Shivapriya, Sridhari, Srikari, Kalya,

Sridhararddhasharirini, Anantadrishti, Akshudra.

(91) Dhatrisha, Dhanadapriya, Daityasamuhaniyantri, Simhika, Simhavahana, Suvarchala, Sushroni, Sukirti, Chhinnasamshaya, Rasajna.

(92) Rasada, Rama, Lelihana, Amritasrava, Nityodita, Svayamjyotih, Utsuka, Mritajivani, Vajratunda, Vajrajihva.

(93) Mangalya, Mangala, Mala, Nirmala, Malaharini, Gandharvi, Garudai, Chandri, Kambalashvatarapriya, Soudamini.

(94) Janananda, Bhrikutikutilanana, Kamikarakara, Kakshya, Kamsapranapaharini, Yugandhara, Yugavarta, Trisandhya, Harshavardhini, Pratyakshadevata.

(95) Divya, Divyagandhathivasana, Shakrasanagata, Shakri, Sadhya, Charusharasana, Ishta, Vishishta, Shishteshta, Shishtashishtaprapujita.

(96) Shatarupa, Shatavarta, Vinata, Surabhi, Sura, Surendramata, Sudyumna, Sushumna, Suryasamsthita, Samiksha.

(97) Satpratishtha, Nivritti, Jnanaparaga, Dharmashastrarthakushala, Dharmajna, Dharmavahana, Dharmadharmavinirmatri, Dharmikamangalaprada, Dharmamayi, Dharmashakti.

(98) Vidharma, Vishvadharmini, Dharmantara, Dharmamayi, Dharmapurva, Dhanavaha, Dharmopadeshtri, Dharmaksha, Dharmagamya, Dharadhara.

(100) Mahadevaikasakshini, Sadashiva, Vishaynmurti, Vedamurti, Amurtika, Paramaeshvari, Shobha, Vishala, Prasannavadana, Hrishtatma.

This completes the list of the one thousand names given to the goddess. Although Himalaya had used on thousand and eight names in the course of his prayers, ten of these names are missing in the list. You will also have noticed that a few of the names occur more than once.

(89) Mrigakshi, Manadayini, Vasuprada, Vasumati, Vasudhara, Vasundhara, Dharadhara, Vararoha, Characharasahsrada, Srifala.

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The Line of Uttanapada

It is hoped that you have not forgotten that Svayambhuva Manu and his wife Shatarupa had a son named Uttanapada. Uttanapada's brother was

Priyavarta. Dhruva was Uttanapada's son. Dhruva was so devoted to Vishnu that Vishnu earmarked for him a place in the heaven known as Dhruvaloka. (Dhruva became the Pole Star. The complete story of Dhruva and his tapasya in given in the Vishnu Purana).

Also in Uttanapada's line was bom Chakshusha. He became a manu. (Chakshusha was the sixth Manu of the present kalpa). In Chakshusha Manu's line was born Vena, and Vena's son was Prithu. Prithu milked the earth and obtained foodgrains on which people can survive. That is the reason why the earth is known as Prithivi. (Prithu's story is given in several Puranas, in addition to the Mahabharataa and the Harivamsha).

Prithu's son was Shikhandi and Shikhandi's son was Sushila. Sushila was a very religious person. He faithfully studied the Vedas and visited several places of pilgrimage. His travels eventually brought him to the Himalayas, through which the sacred river Mandakini flowed. Near the banks of the river was a beautiful hermitage. It was there that Sushila began to pray to Shiva. While Sushila was thus praying, a sage named Shvetashvatara arrived. The sage's body was lean with tapasya and he was smeared with ashes.

Sushila finished praying to Shiva and worshipped the sage. "I am indeed fortunate that I have met you," he told Shvetashvatara. "Please make me your disciple and teach me all that there is to know."

The sage agreed. He taught Sushila and several other disciples the knowledge of the shastras (sacred texts).

Shikhandi had a brother named Havirddhana. Havirddhana's son was Prachinavarhi. He married Savama, the daughter of the ocean, and had ten sons. These sons were known as the Prachetas. The Prachetas were devoted to Vishnu and prayed to Vishnu for several years. (The Vishnu Purana states that they meditated for ten thousand years under the ocean.) All ten Prachetas married Marisha and Daksha was bom as a result of this marriage. (Marisha's story is given in the Vishnu Purana.) It was this Daksha who had earlier been bom as Brahma's son. Because he quarrelled with Shiva, Shiva cursed Daksha that he would be born as the son of the Prachetas.

"Tell us the story of Daksha," the sages requested Lomaharshana.

(The Prachetas are not to be confused with a sage named Pracheta. The sage Pracheta was Brahma's son, as per the Brahmavaivarta Purana.)

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Daksha's Story

Daksha was Brahma's son and had a daughter named Sati. Sati was married to Shiva. Daksha was thus Shiva's father-in-law.

Once Daksha came to visit his son-in-law. But although Shiva worshipped him with all due respect, Daksha felt that he had been slighted. Subsequently, when Sati went to visit her father, Daksha severely reprimanded her.

"Your husband is worse than useless," he told his daughter. "My other sons-in-law are far superior to him. You are not welcome in my house. Return to your worthless husband."

Sati could not bear to hear this abuse of her husband and immolated herself. She was later born as Parvati, the daughter of Himavana (the Himalayas) and married Shiva again.

Shiva was furious to learn that Sati had died. He visited Daksha and cursed him that he would be bom on earth as the son of a kshatriya. It was thus that Daksha had been born as the son of the Prachetas.

(Dakhsa's story is full of inconsistencies in the Puranas. There is an account of a yajna that Daksha performed. Shiva either destroyed this yajna himself, or had it destroyed by Virabhadra. But which Daksha performed this yajna, the one who was the son of Brahma or the one who was the son of Prachetas? The Kurma Purana suggests that it was the son of the Prachetas who performed this ceremony. The more customary account, such as that in the Bhagavata Purana, is that it was Brahma's son who performed the sacrifice. Daksha was angered at Shiva because, on one particular occasion, Shiva did not stand up to show him respect, although Daksha happened to be Shiva's father-in-law. Daksha therefore organised a yajna to which he did not invite Shiva. Sati went to the ceremony uninvited, and immolated herself when her father started criticise her husband. Hearing of Sati's death, Shiva destroyed the yajna. He also cursed Daksha that Daksha would have to be bom as the son of the Prachetas.)

To return to the account of the Kurma Purana, the Daksha, who was the son of the Prachetas, organised a yajna. All the gods and sages were

invited to this ceremony. But as a result of Daksha's earlier enmity with his son-in-law, Shiva was not invited.

There was a sage named Dadhichi who protested at this slight to Shiva. "How can you have a religious ceremony without inviting Shiva?" he told Daksha.

"Shiva is a worthless fellow," replied Daksha. "He is not fit to be worshipped together with the other gods. He wears skulls and destroys all that is created. How can he be treated as an equal of the great Vishnu, the preserver of all that one can see? My yajna is dedicated to Vishnu. It is not meant for the likes of Shiva."

Dadhichi tried to persuade Daksha that Shiva should not be ignored, but Daksha was in no mood to listen. Dadhichi refused to take part in such a yajna and assured Daksha that his ceremony would not be successfully completed. He also cursed the other sages, who had sided with Daksha, that they would go to hell and would deviate from the path laid down in the Vedas. (The Mahabharataa also records Dadhichi's protest. According to the Mahabharataa, Dadhichi was devoted to Shiva.)

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Daksha went ahead with his yajna. The other gods, including Vishnu, came to attend the ceremony.

Meanwhile, Parvati got to know about the yajna and told Shiva, "How can

there be a ceremony at which you are not invited? Although Daksha used to be my father in my earlier life, this evil act of his should not be condoned. Please destroy the ceremony."

(If one goes by the more customary account, the question of Parvati's asking Shiva to destroy the yajna does not arise. Sati died on the occasion of the ceremony and it was the grief of Sati's death that led Shiva to exact vengeance. This happened much before Parvati was born as the daughter of Himavana.)

Because of Parvati's bidding, Shiva created a demon named Virabhadra. Virabhadra had a thousand heads, a thousand feet, a thousand eyes and a thousand arms. His body shone with radiance like the sun at the time of destruction. The thousand arms held all sorts of weapons in them.

"What are my orders?" Virabhadra asked Shiva.

"Go and destroy Daksha's yajna," was the reply.

Virabhadra ascended a bull and set out for Daksha's house. He created thousands and thousands of demons who would aid him in the task of destruction. These demons were armed with spears, tridents, maces, clubs and stones. Parvati also created a goddess named Bhadrakali who would help Virabhadra.

This strange army arrived at the place where the yajna was being held and said, "We are Shiva's followers. We have come to receive Shiva's share of the offerings."

"No offerings have been earmarked for Shiva," replied the gods and the sages. "He has not even been invited to the sacrifice.

These words angered Virabhadra and he began his task of destruction. His companions uprooted the scaffoldings that had been erected on the occasion of the sacrifice. The sacrificial horse was flung into the waters of the river Ganga. (This was an ashvamedha yajna (horse sacrifice) that was being performed on the banks of the river Ganga.

Virabhadra caught hold of Bhaga (identified as the sun-god Surya) and tore out his eyes. He smashed the teeth of the god Pusha (also identified

as another manifestation of the sun-god Surya). As for the moon-god Chandra, Virabhadra gave him a resounding kick and sent him reeling. The fire-god Agni had his arms and tongue sliced off by Virabhadra's companions. The sages were kicked and boxed.

Vishnu himself came to intervene and Virabhadra began to fight with Vishnu.

Vishnu has a wonderful weapon named sudarshana chakra (a bladed-discuss) and he hurled this at Virabhadra. But Virabhadra easily repelled this weapon with his arrows. Vishnu is carried by Garuda, king of the birds. Garuda attacked Virabhadra, but so fierce was Virabhadra, that Garuda had to flee. The entire universe marvelled to see that Virabhadra could thus vanquish Vishnu and Garuda.

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Brahma now arrived and sought to put an end to the fighting. He started to pray to Shiva and Shiva and Parvati arrived on the scene. The assembled gods and sages also began to pray to Shiva and Parvati. Parvati was moved to pity by these prayers.

"These gods and sages have now sought refuge with you," she told Shiva. "Please pardon them their sins."

"Agreed," replied Shiva. "You have my blessing snow. But please remember that one cannot have a religious ceremony without I being worshipped."

The gods and the sages realised that Shiva was no different from Vishnu. They were really one and the same, different manifestations of the same universal force.

When Daksha had earlier been bom as the son of Brahma, he had married Asikli, the daughter of Virana. (There is a minor contradiction here as well. Earlier, the Kurma Purana has stated that Daksha's wife was Prasuti. It is of course possible that Prasuti and Asikli were different names for the same individual.)

Daksha and Asikli had one thousand sons. But the sage Narada had persuaded these sons to become hermits, disinterested in worldly pursuits. (The Vishnu Purana given a more complete account. First, five thousand sons named the Haryashvas had been bom and Narada had persuaded these sons to become hermits. Next, one thousand sons named the Shavalashvas had been bom and these had also become hermits at Narada's instigation. Thereafter, sixty daughters had been bom.)

To return to the account of Kurma Purana, Daksha and Asikli had had sixty daughters had been married to Dharma, Brahma's son. (There is again a contradiction. In the section on creation, the Kurma Purana had stated that thirteen daughters had been married to Dharma.) The ten daughters who had been married to Dharma were Marutvati, Vasu, Yami, Lamba, Bhanu, Arundhati, Sankalpa, Muhurta, Sadhya and Vishva. Vishva's sons were the gods known as the vishvadevas, Sadhya's sons the gods known as the sadhyas, Marutvati's sons the gods known as the bhanus. (More usually, the Puranas have a completely different account of the birth of the maruts. They were born as the sons of Diti, Kashyapa's wife.) Muhurta gave birth to time, Lamba to cattle (ghosha), Yami to snakes (nagas), Arundhati to all the objects (vishaya) on earth and Sankalpa to resolution (sankalpa).

Thirteen of Daksha's daughters had been married to the sage Kashyapa. Their names were Aditi, Diti, Arishta, Danu, Surasa, Khasa, Surabhi, Vinata, Tamra, Krodhavasha, Ira, Kadru and Muni. Twelve gods known as the adityas were bom as the sons of Aditi. Their names were Amsha, Dhata, Bhaga, Tvashta, Mitra, Varuna, Aryama, Vivasvana, Savita, Pusha, Amshumana and Vishnu.

Danu's sons were demons (danavas). Chief among them were Tara, Shambara, Kapila, Shankara, Svarbhanu and Vrishaparva. (Some Puranas mention forty such sons.)

Surasa gave birth to the Gandharvas. (More usually, it is stated that Surasa was the mother of the snakes (nagas).)

Aristha's sons were thousands and thousands of snakes (sarpas).

Kadru's sons were also snakes (nagas).

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Tamra's daughters were the ancestors of the birds. Surabhi gave birth to cows and buffaloes and Ira to trees and herbs.

Khasa was the mother of yakshas (demi-gods), Muni of apsaras and

Krodhavasha ofrakshasas.

Vinata had two sons named Garuda and Aruna. These two sons performed very difficult tapasya. Garuda pleased Vishnu and obtained the boon that he would carry Vishnu around. Aruna pleased Shiva and obtained the boon that he would become the sun's charioteer. (The story of the rivalry between Vinata and Kadru and their respective offspring is given in the Bhagavata and Matsya Puranas.)

This leaves Diti. She had two sons named Hiranyakashipu and Hiranyaksha. These two sons were demons and their children came to be known as the daityas. Hiranyakashipu was elder to Hiranyaksha. (The Puranas do not agree on this. In some Puranas, Hiranyaksha is referred to as the elder brother.)

Tamra's daughters were the ancestors of the birds. Surabhi gave birth to cows and buffaloes and Ira to trees and herbs.

Khasa was the mother of yakshas (demi-gods), Muni of apsaras and Krodhavasha of rakshasas.

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Hiranyakashipu

Hiranyakashipu pleased Brahma through his prayers. As a result of the boon that he received from Brahma, he became invisible and started to

oppress the world. He drove the gods out of heaven.

The gods and the sages went to Brahma to persuade him to do something about Hiranyakashipu.

"I cannot really help you," said Brahma. "Go to the northern shores of the great ocean and pray to Vishnu there. I will accompany you. It is Vishnu alone who can find a solution."

Brahma led the gods and the sages to the shores of the great ocean and started to pray to Vishnu there.

Vishnu appeared before them. "Why have all of you come here?" he asked. "What do you want?"

"It is Hiranyakashipu," replied the gods and the sages. "He is oppressing the world thanks to a boon received from Brahma. Because of the boon, he can only be killed by you. Please kill him and save the universe."

Vishnu created a being out of his body. This being was as gigantic as Mount Sumeru and held a lotus (padma), a conch-shell (shankha) and a mace (gada) in his hands. "Go and kill Hiranyakashipu," Vishnu instructed the being.

The being thereupon ascended Garuda and left for Hiranyakashipu's capital. His roars made the ramparts of the city quake.

Hiranyakashipu had four sons named Prahlada, Anuhrada, Samhrada and Hrada. (The more usual names are Prahlada, Anuhlada, Samhlada and Hlada.) Accompanied by Hirayakashipu's demon soldiers, these four sons came out to fight with the being easily repelled all of these. The four princes then unleashed divine weapons on the being. Prahlada used brahmastra, Anuhrada vaishnavastra, Samhrada koumarastra and Hrada agneyastra. But these divine weapons could do the wonderful being no harm. He merely picked up the princes and flung them far away.

On seeing that his sons had thus been disposed of, Hiranyakashipu came to fight. He gave the being a resounding kick on his chest and the creature fled in pain to Vishnu.

Vishnu now realised that he would have to take care of Hiranyakashipu himself. He adopted the form of a being who was a half-man and half-lion. Since nara means man and simha means lion, this came to be known as the narasimha incarnation (avatara) of Vishnu.

"Go and kill this peculiar creature," Hiranyakashipu instructed Prahlada.

Prahlada and his brothers tried to fight with Vishnu, but were defeated easily. Hiranyakashipu now sent his brother Hiranyakasha to fight. Hiranyakasha used several weapons on Vishnu, including the diving weapon known as Pashupata. But these weapons could do Vishnu no harm.

Meanwhile, Prahlada had realised that this being could be none other than Vishnu. He started to pray to Vishnu. He requested his brothers, uncle and father not to fight with Vishnu. Vishnu smote Hiranyakashipu's chest with his claws and thereby killed him. He also killed Anuhrada, Samhrada and Hrada.

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(A fairly common story in the Puranas, such as the Vishnu Purana, is the story of Prahlada. Despite being Hiranyakashipu's son, Prahlada was devoted to Vishnu from his childhood. Hiranyakashipu had no desire to have a son who was devoted to Vishnu and did his level best to kill

Prahlada. But Prahlada was protected by Vishnu and survived all these attempts. In the final incident, narasimha appeared while Hiranyakashipu was arguing with Prahlada and killed the demon-king. Vishnu then crowned Prahlada king in Hiranyakashipu's place. There was no question of Hiranyaksha becoming king after Hiranyakashipu. In the more common account, Hiranyaksha was the elder brother and had already been killed by Vishnu in his boar (Varaha) incarnation. It was Hiranyakasha's death that led to Hiranyakashipu's hatred of Vishnu. There is thus some variance between this more common account and that related by the Kurma Purana.)

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Hiranyaksha

After Hiranyakashipu died, Hiranyaksha became the king of the demons.

Hiranyaksha promptly began to oppress the world. He defeated the gods and drove them out of heaven. He also took the earth down to the underworld. The gods again went to Brahma in search of a solution and Brahma took them to Vishnu. They prayed to Vishnu so that Hiranyaksha might be killed.

Vishnu adopted the form of a boar and killed Hiranyaksha. He also raised the earth up to its rightful place. (This was the story that was alluded to when the Kurma Purana mentioned Vishnu's boar incarnation.)

When Hiranyaksha was killed, Prahlada became the king of demons. Initially, he ruled well. He worshipped Vishnu and performed yajnas. The kingdom thrived and prospered. But on one occasion, Prahlada forgot to worship a brahmana through inadvertence.

The brahmana was furious as he thought that Prahlada had done this knowingly. "You have dared to ignore me because you thank that you are blessed by Vishnu," said the brahmana. "I curse you that you will forget all about Vishnu. Your delusions will make you fight with Vishnu and you will lose all your powers."

As a result of the brahmana's curse, Prahlada deviated from the righteous path. He ignored the brahmanas and the Vedas. He desired to have revenge on Vishnu for having killed his father and uncle. Prahlada fought a long and bitter war with Vishnu. When he was eventually defeated by Vishnu, he realised the folly of his evil ways and sought refuge with Vishnu.

After Prahlada's death, Hiranyaksha's son Andhaka became the king of the demons.

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A Digression on Goutama

Many years ago, there was a terrible drought on earth. There was no food to be had and famine prevailed. There were several sages who lived in the

forest, and they too, suffered from a lack of food.

Goutama was a very powerful sage and he had a hermitage in the forest. Such were the powers that Goutama had that it never stopped raining in his hermitage. There was no famine there and plenty of food was to be had. The other sages therefore went to Goutama's hermitage and begged him to provide them with food and shelter. This request Goutama readily agreed to, and the sages lived there happily.

After twelve years had passed, it began to rain again. The drought had passed and foodgrains started to grow. The sages no begged their leave of Goutama.

"Stay for a few more days," said Goutama. "Be my guests and bless my household."

The sages tarried, but they were jealous of Goutama and his powers. They therefore plotted to bring about Goutama's downfall. With their own powers, they created a black calf. This calf was nothing but an illusion. But having created it, the sages sent it to Goutama. Goutama found the calf wandering around and decided to take it to his cowshed. But as soon as he touched the calf, the calf seemed to die. All this was because of the illusion, but Goutama did not know this. He was thunderstruck at having killed a cow.

"You are evil, you have killed a cow," the sages told Goutama. "It would be a sin to remain as your guest. We are leaving."

By then, Goutama had got to know that the calf had been an illusion. He was extremely angry with the sages and cursed them, "because you have been evil, you have deviate from the path laid down by the Vedas. You will rot in hell and will have to be born several times to be freed of your sins."

The sages started to pray to Vishnu and Shiva. They wished that their sins might be cleansed.

"What shall we do with these sages?" Shiva asked Vishnu. "Shall we pardon them? They are praying for deliverance."

"Never," replied Vishnu. "Those who do not follow what is laid down in the Vedas will surely rot in hell. But since they are not permitted to follow the sacred shastras, let us compose some other shastras for them. They will follow those evil shastras, rot in hell and be born on earth several times. That is their penance."

To delude the sages, Shiva himself pretended to be a great religious teacher. He preached evil ways and the stupid brahmanas began to follow what he preached.

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Andhaka

While Shiva was gone, he left his companion Nandi to look after his household. He also gave Vishnu the overall responsibility of ensuring that

all was well with Parvati and the gods and the sages.

Realising that Shiva was away, Andhaka thought that this was the opportune moment for abducting Parvati. He found that Nandi stood guard at the entrance to Shiva's house and began to fight with Nandi. Nandi struck Andhaka on the chest with a trident.

This angered Andhaka and he created a thousand other demons who were just like him in appearance. This army of demons defeated Nandi and the gods. Nandi did not know what to do and started to pray to Vishnu. Vishnu created some goddesses from his body and these goddesses killed the demon soldiers. Andhaka also fled.

After twelve years had passed, Shiva returned and learnt what had transpired.

By then, Andhaka had recovered and he returned, determined in his bid to abduct Parvati. Both Shiva and Vishnu started to fight with Andhaka's army.

Vishnu told Shiva, "Kill this demon. No one but you can kill Andhaka. Please kill the demon and deliver the universe."

Shiva pierced Andhaka's chest with a trident. He held the trident aloft, with Andhaka transfixed to one of its prongs. And with his trident held aloft, Shiva began to dance.

But all the evil had deserted Andhaka's body and mind as soon as he had been pierced by Shiva's trident. He started to pray to Shiva. These prayers pleased Shiva.

He lowered the trident and told Andhaka, "I am pleased with your prayers. My companions are known as the ganas. Stay by my side and be a ganapati, that is, a lord over the ganas. You will be Nandi's companion."

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Bali

With Andhaka thus taken care of, Prahlada's son Virochana became the king of the demons. He ruled his kingdom well.

There was a sage named Sanatakumara who once went to visit Virochana. Virochana was delighted to see the sage and Sanatakumara instructed Virochana on the true nature of the universe. These teachings so impressed Virochana that he no longer had any desire to be a king. He went off to meditate, after having crowned his son, Bali, as the king of the demons.

Bali was a good and righteous king. He ruled well and observed religious rites faithfully. But he defeated Indra and the other gods and won over heaven from them. Indra and the other gods started to pray to Vishnu for deliverance.

The mother of all the gods was Aditi and she was despondent at seeing her children suffer thus. She too, started to pray to Vishnu. Stirred by these prayers, Vishnu appeared before Aditi.

"What boon do you desire?" he asked.

"Please grant me the boon that you will be bom as my son." replied Aditi. "And as my son, you will take care of Bali."

Vishnu granted the boon and was bom as Aditi's son. As Aditi's son, Vishnu studied the Vedas under the sage Bharadvaja.

Meanwhile, Bali arranged a yajna and Vishnu came to attend the ceremony in the form of a dwarf (Vamana). (In more usual accounts, such as the Bhagavata Purana, Vishnu was born as a dwarf.)

Bali was not going to refuse anything to anyone on the occasion of the sacrifice. As soon as he saw the dwarf, he worshipped him and said, "I am fortunate that you have come to attend my ceremony. Please tell me what I can do for you."

"Grant me as much of land as can be covered in three of my footsteps," replied the dwarf.

This boon Bali granted. The dwarf immediately assumed a gigantic form. With one footstep, Vishnu covered the entire earth. With a second, he covered the sky. And with the third and final footstep, he covered heaven. The entire universe is inside and egg (anda) and outside the egg there is

water. Vishnu's foot cracked the shell of the egg and some of the water that was outside, poured in. This water began to flow through the sky and became the heavenly Ganga. (The story of the heavenly Ganga (identified as the Milky Way) descending to earth is a separate story. The story of Ganga being born from Vishnu's body is given in the Brahmavaivarta Purana.)

Having traversed all the land that was available, Vishnu resumed his form of a dwarf.

"You have now donated to me all the three worlds," he told Bali. "Where will you stay?"

"I seek refuge with you," was Bali's answer.

Vishnu then instructed Bali to go and live in the underworld. As for heaven, it was restored to Indra.

This is the story of Vishnu's dwarf (Vamana) incarnation.

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Vana

Bali had a hundred sons, the eldest among whom was Vana. Vana was devoted to Shiva. He was also extremely powerful. He defeated Indra and

conquered the three worlds.

Indra and the other gods went to Shiva. "Your devotee, Vana is oppressing us," they told Shiva. "Please take care of him."

Shiva took up a single arrow and with this, he completely burnt up Vana's city.

(This is deviation from the usual account of the Puranas, such as the Vishnu Purana or the Bhagavata Purana. In those accounts, Krishna fought with Vana and defeated him, although Shiva fought on Vana's side. It was because of Krishna's blessings that Vana became Shiva's companion. Vana's capital was named Shonitapura.)

When Vana's city was being burnt up, Vana emerged and started to pray to Shiva's linga (image of Shiva). Pleased at Vana's prayers, Shiva made Vana a ganapati. Thus, Vana came to be Shiva's constant companion.

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The Solar Dynasty

The sun-god, Vivasvana, was the son of Kashyapa and Aditi. He had four wives, Samjna, Rajni, Prabha and Chhaya.

Samjna's son was Vaivasvata Manu. Rajni's children were Yama, yamuna and Revanta. Savami, Shani, Tapati and Vishti were Chhaya's children and Prabha's son was Prabhata.

(The names do not tally across the Puranas. For example, in the Markandeya Purana, the sun had only two wives, Samjna and Chhaya. Yama and Yamuna were also the children of Samjna.) Vaivasvata Manu had nine sons. Their names were Ikshvaku, Nabhaga, Arishta, Karusha and Prishadhra. Manu also had a daughter named Ila, from whom the lunar dynasty originated.

Ikshvaku's son was Vikukshi and this was the line of Kakutstha. In this line was born Rama, of Ramayana fame.

The names of several kings of the solar dynasty are given. But these we will not reproduce, as they are merely a catalogue of names.

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The Lunar Dynasty

Budha was the son of the moon-god Chandra. Budha married Ila and they had a son named Pururava.

Pururava married the apsara Urvashi and they had six sons. One of these sons was Ayu and amongst Ayu's descendants was a king named Yayati.

Yayati had two wives. The first was Devayani, daughter of Shukracharya, the preceptor of the demons. The second wife was named Sharmishtha and she was the daughter of Vrishaparva, the king of the danavas. Yayati and Devayani had two sons, Yadu and Tursavu. Yayati and Sharmishtha had three sons, Druhya, Anu and Puru. When it became time for Yayati to retire to the forest, he gave puru the bulk of the kingdom and Puru's descendants came to be known as the Pauravas. Yadu was given some land towards the south-west and his descendants were the Yadavas. Turvasu ruled to the south-east, Druhya to the west and Anu to the north.

One of Yadu's descendants was the king Kritavirya and Kritavirya's son became famous as Kartavirya Arjuna. He had a thousand arms and was the most skilled of fighters. He eventually met his death at the hands of Parashurama.

Kartavirya Arjuna had several hundred sons. But the five most important ones were Shura, Shurasena, Krishna, Dhrishna and Jayadvaja. Jayadvaja was devoted to Vishnu, but his brothers were more inclined towards the worship of Shiva.

The four brothers told Jayadhvaja. "Stop worshipping Vishnu. Our father was a devotee of Shiva's and it is our duty to follow the example set by our father. Let us worship Shiva."

"It is my duty to worship Vishnu," replied Jayadhvaja. "Vishnu is the lord of everything, he is the preserver. How can I do otherwise?"

The brothers debated about the virtues of worshipping Shiva vis-a-vis Vishnu, but could arrive at no consensus. They therefore decided to seek the advice of the seven great sages (saptarshi), chief amongst whom was Vashistha.

Vashishtha told the brothers, "One worships the god that one chooses. There are no rules in this regard. All gods yield the desired fruit, if properly worshipped. To the extent that there are rules, there are as follows. Kings worship Vishnu and Indra; brahmanas worship Agni, Aditya, Brahma and Shiva; the gods worship Vishnu; the demons worship

Shiva; the yakshas and gandharvas worship Chandra; the sages worship Brahma and Shiva; and women worship Parvati. But for humans, the best way is to realise that Shiva is no different from Vishnu and that Shiva and Vishnu should therefore be worshipped simultaneously."

The Kurma Purana also gives the names of several kings belongings to the lunar dynasty. But these we will gloss over, as they are merely only a catalogue of names.

The Lunar Dynasty

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The Kurma Purana also gives the names of several kings belongings to the lunar dynasty. But these we will gloss over, as they are merely only a catalogue of names.

Durjaya and Urvashi

There used to be a king named Durjaya. He was learned in the shastras and a good king.

His wife was a beautiful and good woman.

One day, King Durjaya went to the banks of the river Kalindi. There he met the apsara Urvashi and fell in love with her. He married Urvashi and lived with her for many years.

After several years had passed, Durjaya remembered his kingdom and wife. He told Urvashi, "Please let me return to my home now."

"Not yet, king," replied Urvashi. "Please stay with me for one more year."

"I will return as soon as I have visited my kingdom," said Durjaya. "I promise you that I will not tarry there. Therefore, let me return."

"I will let you go on condition that you do not live as the husband of any other woman," replied Urvashi.

Durjaya agreed to this condition and returned home. But because of the word that he had given Urvashi, he stayed away from his wife and did not venture near her. His wife tried to find out what the matter was, but Durjaya would not reply. Finally, the queen got to know what Durjaya had done and realised that her husband had committed a sin. He should not have married Urvashi while his wife was still alive. The queen therefore told Durjaya, "You have sinned. You must perform penance. That is the sort of action that befits a king, not this despondency that you have become addicted to."

King Durjaya went and met the sage Kanva to ascertain what sort of penance should be performed for the sin that he had committed. Kanva advised him to go to the Himalayas and meditate.

While Durjaya was going to the Himalayas, he met a Gandharva king. The Gandharva king wore a divine garland, Durjaya remembered Urvashi. He thought that the garland was a fitting adornment for no one but Urvashi. He began to fight with the Gandharva over the possession of the garland. Durjaya managed to defeat the Gandharva king and obtain the garland. He immediately hastened to banks of the river Kalindi, because he thought that he might find Urvashi there. But Urvashi was not to be found, and Durjaya roamed the world in search of her. Finally, Durjaya arrived in the region of Mount Sumeru. The lake Manasa is located there.

And by the shores of the lake, Durjaya found Urvashi. He gave the apsara the garland and lived happily with her for some time.

After a few days had passed, Urvashi asked Durjaya, "King please tell me what transpired when you went home."

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Durjaya thereupon told Urvashi about the conversation that he had with his wife and about what the sage Kanva had asked him to do.

Urvashi was alarmed when she heard the king's account. "What have you

done?" she exclaimed. "Hasten back, otherwise Kanva and your wife will curse the two of us."

But Durjaya was so smitten with love for Urvashi that he refused to listen to Urvashi's entreaties. Urvashi therefore made herself very ugly. This repelled Durjaya, and he gave Urvashi up.

For twelve years Durjaya performed difficult tapasya, living only on fruits and roots. For another twelve years, he lived only on air. After having thus meditated for twenty-four years, Durjaya went to Kanva's hermitage and told the sage all that he had done.

"I am pleased that you have realised the folly of your ways and have performed tapasya," said Kanva. "But that alone is not enough. Your sin has been too severe. Go to the city of Varanasi and live there. Shiva is ever-present in that city and he will pardon all your sins."

Durjaya did this and was pardoned all his sins. Such are the benefits of praying to Shiva and such are the virtues of the wonderful city of Varanasi.

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Krishna's Tapasya

Krishna was the eight incarnation of Vishnu and he was bom as the son of Devaki and Vasudeva.

Initially, Krishna did not have any sons. Desirous of obtaining a son, Krishna went to visit the sage Upamanyu. The sage's hermitage was beautiful. Wonderous were the trees and flowers and grew there. The constant chanting of the Vedas could be heard. Wild animals lost their ferocity as soon as they entered the hermitage. Lotus flowers bloomed in the ponds. Sages came from all over the country to meditate in the hermitage. The sacred river Ganga flowed past the hermitage.

Krishna greeted the sages and they worshipped him in return.

Upamanyu welcomed Krishna with various offerings and said, "Our meditation has been amply rewarded by your visit. The great Vishnu has himself come to grace us by your presence. But is there any particular reason as to why you have come to the hermitage?"

"I wish to meet Shiva," replied Krishna. "How does one get to met him?"

"Shiva appears if a devotee performs difficult tapasya," said Upamanyu. "It helps if the meditation is accompanied by great faith."

Hearing these words, Krishna began a difficult religious rite known as pashupata vrata. He donned clothes made out of the barks of trees, smeared ashes on his body and continuously chanted Shiva's name. After many years had passed, Shiva and Parvati appeared before Krishna.

"Krishna, why are you performing tapasya?" asked Shiva. "You are the great Vishnu himself. Any object that you desire is immediately attained. Why are you then engaged in this task of meditation?"

"I wish to have a son who is just like you," said Krishna. "Please let him also be devoted to you."

Shiva gladly granted the boon and the son who was born was Shamba (alternatively, Samba). He was the son of Krishna and Jambavati.

(Stories about Shamba are to be found in the Vishnu Purana, and also in Mahabharataa.)

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The YUGAS (Eras)

You probably remember that there are four yugas or eras - Satya Yuga or Krita Yuga, Treta Yuga, Dvapara Yuga and Kali Yuga.

Lomaharshana next told the sages about the characteristics of these four eras.

Kali Yuga is the worst of the four eras. People are sinful and forget the dharma of the four varnas and the four ashramas. In fact, men are so sinful that no prescribed penance atones for their sins. The only place which is free from such sins is the sacred city of Varanasi.

In Satya Yuga, the best course to be pursued is meditation; in Treta Yuga it is the pursuit of knowledge (jnana); in Dvapara Yuga it is the performance of yajnas; and in Kali Yuga it is the donation of alms. Brahma is the primary god in Satya Yuga, Surya in Treta Yuga, Vishnu in Dvapara Yuga and Shiva in Kali Yuga.

Envy and jealousy were unknown in Satya Yuga and everyone was happy. There was no superiors and inferiors and all individuals were equally healthy and equally handsome. There were no fixed places for people to live in, no cities and no villages. Men lived in the mountains and on the shores of the oceans.

In Satya Yuga, water was always freely available. This was no longer the case in Treta Yuga. Water only became available when it rained. Rain was unknown earlier. And as it rained, trees began to grow. People lived on these trees. The fruit from these trees provided the sustenance required to make a living. But gradually, anger and jealousy came to be known and many of the wonderful trees disappeared as mankind picked up evils ways. However, enough trees were left to ensure that people did not die of starvation. They lived on honey gathered from the trees. Although men looked on Satya Yuga with nostalgia, ill-health and disease continued to be unknown even in Treta Yuga. But towards the end of Treta Yuga, people became really sinful. All the trees disappeared. To make a living, mankind had to resort to agriculture and animal husbandry. The weather became inclement and seasons like summer, monsoon and winter led to hardship. Notions of property were also introduced. Individuals appropriated mountains, rivers, land, trees and herbs as their own. To instil righteousness in the minds of people, the principles of vama ashrama dharma were set out towards the end of Treta Yuga.

In Dvapara Yuga, hatred, anger and jealousy became much more

common. Fighting started. It was then that Veda Vyasa spread amongst ordinary people, the knowledge that was in the Vedas, by dividing them. Drought, death and disease came to be known in Dvapara Yuga.

In Kali Yuga, fraudulence is the norm. There are severe droughts and famines. Revolutions take place. People are liars and sinners. They are easily angered. They d not respect the brahmanas.The brahmanas, on their part, forget all about the Vedas and yajnas. Shudras become kings and oppress the brahmanas. Some Shudras shave off their heads and wear saffron clothes. They pretend to be religious teachers. And horror of horrors, people start to believe in these fraudulent teachers. Women wear hairpins in their hair. As if this alone were not enough, they refuse to obey their husbands. Thieves are everywhere. The only redeeming feature of Kali Yuga is the fact that even if one worships Shiva just a little bit in Kali Yuga, one attains undying punya (store of merit).

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Lingas

A linga is an image of Shiva. There are several wonderful lingas in the wonderful city of Varanasi.

There is a gigantic linga named Omkara. Amongst other famous lingas located in the city are Krittivaseshvara, Madhyadeshvara, Vishveshvara and Kaparddishvara.

The Kurma Purana recites the glories of these lingas. It also enumerates the various tirthas (places of pilgrimage) that are to be found in the city of Varanasi.

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Geography and Astronomy

It is hoped that you have not forgotten that Svayambhuva Manu had a son named Priyavrata. Priyavrata had ten sons. Their names were

Agnidhra, Agnivahu, Vapushmana, Dyutimana, Medha, Medhatithi, Bhavya, Savana, Putra and Jyotishmana.

Medha, Agnivahu and Putra had no desire to rule. They were not interested in material pursuits and became hermits.

Priyavrata divided the earth amongst the remaining seven sons. Thus it was that the earth came to be divided into seven regions or dvipas. The names of these regions are Jambudvipa, Plakshadvipa, Shalmalidvipa, Kushadvipa, Krounchjdvipa, Shakadvipa and Pushkaradvipa. Agnidhra ruled over Jambudvipa, Medhatithi over Plakshadvipa, Vapushmana over Shalmalidvipa, Jyotishmana over Kushadvipa, Dyutimana over Krounchadvipa, Bhavya over Shakadvipa and Savan over Pushkaradvipa.

Agnidhra, the ruler of Jambudvipa, had nine sons. Their names were Nabhi KimPurusha, Hari, Ilavrita, Ramaya, Hiranyavana, Kuru, Bhadrashva and Ketumala. Agnidhra divided Jambudvipa into nine regions (varshas) and gave each of his sons a region to rule over. A king named Bharataa was one of Nabhi's descendants. After the name of Bharataa, the region that Nabhi ruled over has come to be known as Bharataavarsha.

There are fourteen regions (lokas) in the universe. Seven of them form the upper regions. Their names are bhuloka, bhuvarloka, svarloka, maharloka, janaloka, tapolaka and satyaloka. Bhuloka is the earth and its limits extend upto the points that can be lit up the rays of the sun and the moon. Take the distance from bhuloka to the solar circle. An equal distance beyond the solar circle constitutes bhuvarloka. The region from the limits of bhuvarloka to the region of Dhruva (the Pole Star) is svarloka or svarga (heaven). Above the solar circle is the lunar circle and above that come, successively, the regions of the stars (nakshatras), Budha (Mercury), Shukra (Venus), Mangala (Mars), Brihaspati (Jupiter), the saptarshis' (the constellation Ursa Majoris or the Great Bear) and Dhruva.

Shani (Saturn), Brihaspati and Mangala move slowly. The sun, the moon, Budha and Shukra move relatively fast. The sun's chariot is drawn by seven horses named Gayatri, Vrihati, Ushnika, Jagati, Pamki, Anushtupa and Trishtupa. In each month, the sun adopts a specific form known as

an aditya. There are thus twelve adityas - Dhatta, Aryama, Mitra, Varuna, Shakru, Vivasvana, Pusha, Parjanya, Amshu, Bhaga, Tvashta and Vishnu.

Maharloka is above the world of Dhruva (Dhruvaloka). It is reserved for those who have been freed from the bonds of the world. Janaloka is still further away. Brahma's sons live there. Tapaloka is beyond janaloka and satyaloka is beyond tapaloka. Another word for satyaloka is brahmaloka, since Brahma lives there. Vishnu lives there as well.

(The Kurma Purana does not mention the seven lokas that constitute the lower regions of the universe. This is the underworld (patala).)

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(The Kurma Purana does not mention the seven lokas that constitute the lower regions of the universe. This is the underworld (patala).)

There are seven seas that surround the seven dvipas on earth. The names of the seas are Kshara, Ikshu, Sura, Ghrita, Dadhi, Kshira and Svadu. (The names of the seven oceans often differ from Purana to Purana.)

Right in the center of Jambudvipa is Mount Sumeru. To its south lie the mountains Himavana, Hemakuta and Nishadha; and to its north the mountains Nila, Shveta and Sringi. Bharataavarsha is to the south of Mount Sumeru. Brahma's assembly is located on the peak of Mount Sumeru.

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Manvantaras

You already know what a manvantara is. The titles of the seven great sages (saptarshi), the names of the gods and the title of Indra change

from the manvantara to another.

In the present kalpa (cycle), six manvantaras have passed.

The first Manu was Svayambhuva.

The second Manu was Svarochisha. The gods then were the paravatas and tushitas and the title of Indra was held by Vipashchita. The seven great sages were Urjja, Stamba, prana, Dambholi, Vrishabha, Timira and Arvarivana.

Uttama was the third Manu. The gods of this manvantara were the sudhamas, stayas, shiv as, pratardanas and vashavartis and the name of the Indra was Sushanti. Rajah, Gotra, Urddhavahu, Savana, Anagha, Sutapa and Shukra were the seven great sages.

The fourth Manu was Tamasa. The gods of this era were the suravas, haris, satyas and sudhas and the title of Indra was held by Shibi. The seven great sages were Jyotirdhama, Prithu, Kavya, Chaitra, Agni, Varuna and Pivara.

In the fifth manvantara, the Manu was Raivata and the title of Indra was held by Vibhu. The gods were the bhutis and the vaikunthas and the seven great sages were Hiranyaroma, VedaSri, Urddhavahu, Vedavahu, Suvahu and Suparjanya. (The name of the seventh great sage is missing.)

The Manus Svarochisha, Uttama, Tamasa and Raivata were all descended from Svayambhuva Manu.

The sixth Manu was Chakshusha and the Indra then was Manojava. The gods were known as the adyas, prasutas, bhaVyasa, prithukas and lekhas. Sumedha, Vrija, Havishmana, Uttama, Madhu, Abhimana and Sahishnu were the seven great sages.

The seventh manvantara is the one that is now current and the Indra now is Purundara. The Manu is Shradhadeva, the gods are the adityas, the vasus, the rudras and the maruts. The names of the seven great sages are Vashishtha, Kashyapa, Atri, Jamadagni, Goutama, Vishvamitra and Bharadvaja.

In the present kalpa, there will be seven more manvantaras in the future. Thereafter, the world will be destroyed.

(It should be mentioned that the names given in this section do not necessarily tally with the names given in the other Puranas. Not only do the names of the gods, the sages and the Indras differ, the names of the future manvantaras also sometimes differ from Purana to Purana.)

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Veda Vyasa

In every Dvapara Yuga, a Veda Vyasa is born so as to divide the Vedas and disseminate their knowledge. In the present era, there have been

twenty-eight Dvapara Yugas and there have therefore been twenty-eight individuals who have held the title of Veda Vyasa. The Kurma Purana gives their names as follows.

(1) Svayambhuva Manu. (2) Prajapati. (3) Ushana. (4) Brihaspati. (5) Savita. (6) Mrityu. (7) Indra. (8) Vashishtha. (9) Sarasvata. (10) Tridhama. (11) Rishabha. (12) Suteja. (13) Dharma. (14) Sachakshu. (15) Trayaruni. (16) Dhananjaya. (17) Kritanjaya. (18) Ritanjaya. (19)

Bharadvaja. (20) Goutama. (21) Vachashrava. (22) Narayana. (23) Trinavindu. (24) Valmiki. (25) Shaktri. (26) Parashara. (27) Jatukarna. (28) Krishna Dvaipayana.

Krishna Dvaipayana Veda Vyasa divided the Vedas into four parts and taught them to four of his disciples. He taught Paila the Rig Veda. Vaishampayana the Yajur Veda, Jaimini the Sama Veda and Sumantu the Atharva Veda. As for the Puranas, they were taught to Lomaharshana.

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Shiva's Incarnations

Most Puranas only mention Vishnu's incarnations (avataras). The Kurma Purana is one of the great ones which mentions Shiva's incarnations.

In each Kali Yuga, Shiva has had an incarnation. The names of these incarnations are as follows.

(1) Shveta. (2) Sutara. (3) Madana. (4) Suhotra. (5) Kankana. (6) Lokakshi. (7)

Jaigishavya. (8) Dadhivaha. (9) Rishabha. (10) Bhrigu. (11) Ugra. (12) Atri. (13) Bali. (14) Goutama. (15) Vedashirsha. (16) Gokarna. (17) Shikhandaka. (18) Jatamali. (19) Attahasa. (20) Daruka. (21) Langali. (22) Mahavama. (23) Muni. (24) Shuli. (25) Pindamunishvara. (26) Sahishnu. (27) Somasharma. (28) Nakulishvara.

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The Ishvara Gita

While Lomaharshana was reciting the Kurma Purana to the assembled sages, Krishna Dvaipayana Veda Vyasa arrived on the scene.

Lomaharshana and the other sages requested Veda Vyasa to instruct them about the path to true knowledge. This is what Veda Vyasa told them.

The Paramatman (the divine soul) is the only truth. It is ever pure and ever present. It is from the Paramatman that the universe is created and it is into the Paramatman that the universe merges at the time of its destruction. The Paramatman is not the earth. It is not water, energy, wind or sky. It cannot be touched, nor can it be sensed.

The Paramatman is always present in the jivatman (human soul). Any sense of distinction between the Paramatman and the jivatman is due to illusions and the presence of the ego. The truly learned rise above such illusions. Therefore, a wise person does not see any distinction between his own self and other objects. The same Paramatman pervades everything. Just as all rivers unite with the ocean, a learned person realises that all individuals jivatmans unite with the Paramatman.

Yoga (literally, union) is a technique of meditation that helps to bring about this sense of identity between the jivatman and the Paramatman. Yoga has eight components. The first is Pranayama. This means the control of one's breath. The breath of life is known as prana and ayama means control. There are three parts to any Pranayama exercise. When the breath is being exhaled, that is known as rechaka; and the process of inhalation is known as puraka. When the breath is neither being inhaled nor exhaled, that is kumbhaka.

The second component of yoga is pratyahara. This connotes the control of one's senses. Yoga must always be performed in a proper posture and this is the third component of asana. The fourth component is called yama. This means the practice of non-violence, truthfulness and pity. The fifth component is known as niyama. This encompasses worship, studying the Vedas, cleanliness and meditation.

Yoga has a sixth component named dhyana. In this process, one conjures up an image of the Paramatman and meditates continuously on it. The process of fixing this image in one's heart is the seventh component, dharana. And the final component, samadhi, is a situation where the individual realises the complete identity between the jivatman and the

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Rituals

The sacred thread (upavita) ceremony is very important and must always be performed at eight year of age. Brahma had created the cotton tree so that sacred threads might be made out of cotton. But on occasions it is permissible to make sacred threads out of grass.

A guru (teacher) is always to be respected and worshipped. In principle, a guru is anyone from whom knowledge might be gained. But apart from usual teachers, a father-in-law, a grandfather and an individual belonging to a superior vama are also recognised as gurus. A mother, a grandmother, a guru's wife, an aunt, a mother-in-law and the wife of an elder brother are recognised as being equivalent to a guru. One must never show a guru disrespect or argued with. A person who hates his guru is certain to go to hell.

Amongst gurus or those who are equivalent to gurus, the most important are a father, a mother, a teacher, an elder brother and a husband. These have to be respectfully served at all costs.

A brahmana must always wash his mouth after eating, drinking, sleeping, bathing, spitting or changing clothes. The mouth must also be washed before sitting down to study. It is also recommended that the mouth be washed after talking to those who do not believe in the Vedas, shudras, outcasts and women. If a mouthwash is not possible, one can cleanse oneself by touching a piece of clothing is touched inadvertently, the act of purification requires the touching of water, wet grass or the earth.

One of the most sacred mantras (incantations) that one can chant is the gayatri. Before chanting, thirty-two-cells must be drawn, as shown, and the letters of the mantra must be written down in the cells, as indicated. To recite the gayatri, one now reads the letters as they occur in the numbered cells. That is, one starts with cell number one, moves to cell number two and so on and so forth.

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5	13	21	29	28	20	12	4
wr	sya	pra	se	ja	nah	va	tu
6	14	22	30	27	19	11	3
re	dhi	cho	sa	ra	yo	de	vi
7	15	23	31	26	18	10	2
ni	ma	da	va	ro	yo	rgo	tsa
8	16	24	32	25	17	9	1
yam	hi	yat	dom	pa	dhi	bha	ta

A person who kills a brahmana, drinks wine, or steals gold from a brahmana, has to perform penance by killing himself. A person who kills a brahmana may also build a hut in the forest and live there for a period of twelve years. But throughout the period, he has to bear a mark

signifying the dead brahmana's head on his palm. He is also not permitted to visit another brahmana or a temple as long as the penance is going on. It needs to be mentioned that the sin of killing a brahmana can be thus pardoned only if the killing was done inadvertently. If the killing was conscious, no penance will suffice. Under such circumstances, the sinner had best immolate himself in a fire, drown himself, or fast to death.

For other sins, the observance of a religious rite (vrata) is often indicated. The major vratas are as follows.

(i) Santapana: This involves living for one whole day on cow's urine, cowdung, cow's milk, curds made from cow's milk and clarified butter made from cow's milk. The next day is a day of fasting.

(ii) Mahasantapana: This is a more severe version of the earlier vrata. In the case of santapana vrata, five items were listed as permissible food. Mahasantapana vrata lasts for a period of six days, and on each of these days, only one of the five items mentioned may be partaken of. The seventh day is day of fasting.

(iii) Prajapatya or krichha: If this vrata is to be observed, one can eat only during the day. For the first three days, one is only permitted to eat twenty-six handfuls of food, each handful being as large as a hen's egg.

For the next three days, twenty-two handfuls are permitted, but only in the evenings. And for the final three days, twenty-four handfuls are permitted.

(iv) Atikrichha: This is a more severe version of the earlier vrata. For the first three days, a single handful of food is permitted during the day. For the next three days, one handful is permitted in the evenings. One handfuls of food, each handful being as large as a hen's egg.

For the next three days, twenty-two handfuls are permitted, but only in the evenings. And for the final three days, three-four handfuls are permitted.

(v) Paraka: Twelve continuous days of fasting are required for this.

(vi) Taptakrichha: This vrata lasts for a period of twelve days, during which time one is permitted to bathe only once a day. For the first three days one drinks only water; for the next three days one lives on milk; one has to live on clarified butter for the ensuing three days are days of fasting.

(vii) Krichhatikrichha: If one is to observe this vrata, one has to live only on milk for the space of twenty-one days.

(viii) Padakrichha: This vrata lasts for four days. For the first day one eats only one meal; the second day is a day of fasting; on the third day one can eat as much as one wants; and on the fourth and final day, one fasts.

A person who kills a brahmana, drinks wine, or steals gold from a brahmana, has to perform penance by killing himself. A person who kills a brahmana may also build a hut in the forest and live there for a period of twelve years. But throughout the period, he has to bear a mark signifying the dead brahmana's head on his palm. He is also not permitted to visit another brahmana or a temple as long as the penance is going on. It needs to be mentioned that the sin of killing a brahmana can be thus pardoned only if the killing was done inadvertently. If the killing was conscious, no penance will suffice. Under such circumstances, the sinner had best immolate himself in a fire, drown himself, or fast to death.

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(ix) Chandrayana: This vrata lasts for an entire month and begins on the day of the full moon (purnima). On the first day, fifteen handfuls are to be eaten. Thereafter, one handfuls less is eaten on successive days, until on the day of new moon (amavasya), one fasts completely. On each day that

follows, the amount of food eaten is increased by one handful. Finally, on the day of the next full moon, fifteen handfuls of food are eaten and the vrata is completed.

As mentioned earlier, those who kill brahmanas, steal their gold, or drink wine, are sinners. Also sinners are those who associate with these aforementioned sinners for more than one year. Those who associate with outcasts for more than a year are also sinners.

A brahmana who drinks wine should drink boiling wine as a penance. It is also permitted to drink cow's urine as atonement. A person who steals gold from brahmanas will go to the king and confess his guilt. His penance will be completed when the king beats him to death with a club. The only exception is a case where the thief himself happens to be a brahmana. He can then perform penance by meditating. It is always a king's duty to punish sinners. If the king fails in this task, the sins vest with the king.

A person who associates with sinners has to observe taptakrichha vrata for one year. A man who takes on outcast for a wife has to observe taptakrichha or santapana. A brahmana who kills a kshatriya is required to observe prajapatya, santapana or taptakrichha for one year. In case the victim is a vaishya, krichhatikrichha or chandrayana are indicated. If a shudra is killed, five hundred cows have to be donated. If an elephant is killed, taptakrichha vrata has to be observed. Chandrayana will suffice if a cow is killed inadvertently. But if a cow is consciously killed, there is no penance that is adequate.

For minor thefts, the stolen goods have to be returned to the rightful owner and santapana observed. But if a brahmana steals foodgrains, he has to observe prajapatya for an entire year. A cannibal can purity himself through chandrayana vrata. A person who eats the meat of a crow, dog or elephant, has to observe taptakrichha. Santapana is for those who happen to eat mongooses, owls or cats. An eater of camels or donkeys observes taptakrichha.

A brahmana who becomes an atheist can cleanse himself through prajapatya. If he revolts against the gods or against his guru, the act of purification involves taptakrichha. A brahmana who recites the Puranas

to outcasts has to observe chandrayana.

There are several other forms of penance that are catalogued by the Kurma Purana.

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A person who associates with sinners has to observe taptakrichha vrata for one year. A man who takes on outcast for a wife has to observe taptakrichha or santapana. A brahmana who kills a kshatriya is required to observe prajapatya, santapana or taptakrichha for one year. In case the victim is a vaishya, krichhatikrichha or chandrayana are indicated. If a shudra is killed, five hundred cows have to be donated. If an elephant is killed, taptakrichha vrata has to be observed. Chandrayana will suffice if a cow is killed inadvertently. But if a cow is consciously killed, there is no penance that is adequate.

For minor thefts, the stolen goods have to be returned to the rightful owner and santapana observed. But if a brahmana steals foodgrains, he has to observe prajapatya for an entire year. A cannibal can purity himself through chandrayana vrata. A person who eats the meat of a crow, dog or elephant, has to observe taptakrichha. Santapana is for those who happen to eat mongooses, owls or cats. An eater of camels or donkeys observes taptakrichha.

A brahmana who becomes an atheist can cleanse himself through prajapatya. If he revolts against the gods or against his guru, the act of purification involves taptakrichha. A brahmana who recites the Puranas to outcasts has to observe chandrayana.

There are several other forms of penance that are catalogued by the Kurma Purana.

The Sita who was an Illusion

It is certain that you know the story of the Ramayana and you therefore also known that Ravana, the king of Lanka, abducted Sita, Rama's wife. But you certainly do not know the story of the Sita who was an illusion (maya Sita).

This story clearly illustrates that no harm can come to a person who is righteous.

Ravana disguised himself as a hermit and came to abduct Sita. But Sita got to know of Ravana's plan and was determined to foil it. She therefore began to pray to Agni, the god of fire.

Thus stirred by Sita's prayers, Agni appeared and produced a Sita who was really an illusion. This maya sita he left in the real Sita's place. As for the real Sita, she was absorbed into the fire. Without realising the substitutions, Ravana abducted the illusory Sita and the entire war was fought over a Sita who was not even real.

When Rama triumphed over Ravana and recovered Sita, a test by fire (agni pariksha) was held. In the process, the Sita who was an illusion was returned to the fire and the real Sita emerged once again. Thus the real Sita was never tainted by Ravana's touch.

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Shiva and Brahma

Many years ago, Brahma lost his head slightly. He began to imagine that he was superior to Shiva and Vishnu. He told all the sages, "I am the

supreme godhead. There is no one else but me."

While Brahma was thus instructing the sages, Vishnu arrived and was enraged at Brahma's behaviour. "You are indeed ignorant," he told Brahma. "I am the supreme godhead. You are only the creator. But I am, after all, the preserver."

While Vishnu and Brahma were thus arguing the four Vedas adopted animate forms and appeared before them. Each of the Vedas tried to persuade Brahma and Vishnu that Shiva was superior to both of them. Vishnu was persuaded by this reasoning, but Brahma was not.

He told the Vedas, "You must be joking. How can Shiva be superior to the two of us? He is always wandering around with ghosts and demons for companions."

While all this was going on, who should arrive but Shiva? Brahma promptly proceeded to insult Shiva. Shiva then created a being named Kalabhairava from his own body and Kalabhairava started to fight with Brahma. In those days, Brahma used to have five heads. In course of the fighting, Kalabhairava chopped off one of Brahma's heads. Ever since that day, Brahma has had four heads and four faces.

(In many other Puranas, there is no mention of Kalabhairava. Shiva performed the chopping off himself).

Brahma died as soon as his head had been cut off. Shiva did manage to revive him. But the mere fact that Shiva had killed Brahma, meant that Shiva and committed the sin of killing Brahma, a brahmana. As a result of this sin, Brahma's severed head got stuck to Kalabhairava's palm and would not be dislodged. (In accounts where Shiva was himself responsible for the killing, the severed head adhered to Shiva's palm).

Kalabhairava roamed around the world and the head accompanied him on his travels. For a thousand years of the gods, Kalabhairava continued to travel. Eventually, Vishnu advised Kalabhairava to go to the sacred city of Varanasi.

As soon as Kalabhairava arrived at the city of Varanasi, the head (kapala) got dislodged (mochana). A tirtha is a place of pilgrimage. The exact spot

where this wonderful happening took place is accordingly known as Kapalamochana tirtha.

There are many other tirthas that the Kurma Purana describes. Among these are Prayaga, Kurukshetra, Gaya and Madhuvana (Mathura), The glories of the river Narmada are also described. The waters of the river Sarasvati purify a sinner after three days of bathing, while the waters of the river Yamuna takes an entire week. The mere touch of a drop of water from the river Ganga purifies a sinner. But as for the river Narmada, the sight of the waters alone is enough.

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Nandi

There used to be a sage named Shilada. He was righteous and learned in the shastras.

To obtain a son, Shilada began to pray to Shiva. The tapasya went on for a thousand years and Shiva appeared before Shilada.

"I am pleased with your meditation." said Shiva, "what boon do you desire?"

"Please grant me the boon that I may obtain a son who will not be bom from a mother. " replied Shilada, "And my son should be immortal."

Shiva granted the desired boon.

When Shilada was ploughing the land, a handsome boy suddenly appeared on the top of his plough. The four directions shone with the boy's radiance and the boy began to address Shilada as "father".

The son studied the shastras and became learned. He was given the name of Nandi.

Nandi wished to see Shiva and he also wished to become immortal. He therefore went to the shores of the ocean and started to pray to Shiva. He chanted the required mantra one crore times. When Shiva appeared and wished to grant a boon. Nandi said. "Please grant me enough of life so that I can chant the mantra one crore times more."

Shiva appeared once again, and Nandi desired the same boon.

When this had happened three times. Shiva said, "Enough is enough. There is no need for any more chanting of incantations. I make you immortal. I also make you a ganapati, lord over the ganas. You will be my constant companion."

The place where Nandi chanted the incantation has become famous as japyeshvara tirtha.

The maruts had a daughter named Suyasha. Shiva himself arranged that Nandi should be married to Suyasha.

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Epilogue

Vishnu completed his recital of the Kurma Purana and the sages saluted him. They sung his praise. The Kurma Purana is most sacred. A person

who reads it attains Brahmaloka. A person who reads only one chapter of the text is forgiven all his sins. Undying punya is attained by an individual who donates this Purana to brahmanas in the months of Vaishakha or Kartika. Particularly sacred is the part that is known as the Brahmi Samhita.

But the text should never be read or recited in the presence of shudras. A person who ignores this injunction will surely go to hell. There is also a similar injunction about reciting the text to those who are disbelievers (that is, those who do not believe in the Vedas), a person who violates this injunction will be born as a dog in his next life.